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COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

Parliament

# PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES.

## SECOND SESSION, 1917-18-19.

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# SEVENTH PARLIAMENT.

SECOND SESSION.

## Governor-General.

His Excellency the Right Honorable Sir RONALD CRAUFURD MUNRO FERGUSON, a Member of His Majesty's Most Honorable Privy Council, Knight Grand Cross of the Most Distinguished Order of Saint Michael and Saint George, and Commander-in-Chief in and over the Commonwealth of Australia.

## Australian National War Government.

(From 17th February, 1917, to 8th January, 1918.)

Prime Minister and Attorney-General	...	The Right Honorable William Morris Hughes, P.C.
Minister for the Navy	...	The Right Honorable Joseph Cook, P.C.
Treasurer	...	The Right Honorable Sir John Forrest, P.C., G.C.M.G.
Minister for Defence	...	The Honorable George Foster Pearce.
Vice-President of the Executive Council	...	The Honorable Edward Davis Millen.

*Succeeded by*

Minister for Repatriation	...	The Honorable Littleton Ernest Groom (16th November, 1917).
Minister for Works and Railways	...	The Honorable Edward Davis Millen (from 28th September, 1917.)
Minister for Home and Territories	...	The Honorable William Alexander Watt.
Minister for Trade and Customs	...	The Honorable Patrick McMahon Glynn, K.C.
Postmaster-General	...	The Honorable Jens August Jensen.
Honorary Minister	...	The Honorable William Webster.
Honorary Minister	...	The Honorable Littleton Ernest Groom.
Honorary Minister	...	The Honorable Edward John Russell.

## Australian National War Government.

(From 10th January, 1918.)

Prime Minister and Attorney-General	...	The Right Honorable William Morris Hughes, P.C.
Minister for the Navy	...	The Right Honorable Sir Joseph Cook, P.C., G.C.M.G.
Treasurer	...	The Right Honorable Lord Forrest, P.C., G.C.M.G.

*Succeeded by*

Minister for Defence	...	The Honorable William Alexander Watt (27th March, 1918)
Minister for Repatriation	...	The Honorable George Foster Pearce.
Minister for Works and Railways	...	The Honorable Edward Davis Millen.
	...	The Honorable William Alexander Watt.

*Succeeded by*

Minister for Home and Territories	...	The Honorable Littleton Ernest Groom (27th March, 1918).
Minister for Trade and Customs	...	The Honorable Patrick McMahon Glynn, K.C.
	...	The Honorable Jens August Jensen†

*Succeeded by*

	...	The Honorable William Alexander Watt (13th December, 1918).
--	-----	---

*Succeeded by*

Postmaster-General	...	The Honorable Walter Massy Greene (17th January, 1919).
Vice-President of the Executive Council	...	The Honorable William Webster.
	...	The Honorable Littleton Ernest Groom.

*Succeeded by*

Honorary Minister	...	The Honorable Edward John Russell (27th March, 1918).
	...	The Honorable Edward John Russell.
	...	(Appointed Vice-President of the Executive Council, 27th March, 1918).

Honorary Minister	...	The Honorable Alexander Poynton.*
Honorary Minister	...	The Honorable George Henry Wise.*
Honorary Minister	...	The Honorable Walter Massy Greene. (Appointed Minister for Trade and Customs, 17th January, 1919.)*
Honorary Minister	...	The Honorable Richard Beaumont Orchard.**

\*Appointed 26th March, 1918.—†Removed from office, 13th December, 1918.—\*\*Resigned from office, 31st January, 1919.

## Senators.

President—Senator the Honorable Thomas Givens.

Chairman of Committees—Senator John Wallace Shannon.

<sup>1</sup> Bakhap, Thomas Jerome Kingston (T.)	Lynch, Hon. Patrick Joseph (W.A.)
Barker, Stephen (V.)	Maughan, William John Ryott (Q.)
Barnes, John (V.)	<sup>1</sup> McDougall, Allan (N.S.W.)
Bolton, Lieut.-Col. William Kinsey (V.)	Millen, Hon. Edward Davis (N.S.W.)
Buzacott, Richard (W.A.)	†Mulcahy, Hon. Edward (T.)
Crawford, Thomas William (Q.)	Needham, Edward (W.A.)
De Largie, Hon. Hugh (W.A.)	<sup>1</sup> Newland, John (S.A.)
Earle, Hon. John (T.)	O'Keefe, Hon. David John (T.)
Fairbairn, George (V.)	O'Loughlin, Lieut.-Col. Hon. James Vincent, V.D. (S.A.)
Ferricks, Myles Aloysius (Q.)	Pearce, Hon. George Foster (W.A.)
Foll, Hattil Spencer (Q.)	Plain, William (V.)
Gardiner, Hon. Albert (N.S.W.)	Pratten, Herbert Edward (N.S.W.)
Givens, Hon. Thomas (Q.)	Reid, Matthew (Q.)
Grant, John (N.S.W.)	Rowell, Col. James, C.B. (S.A.)
Guthrie, Robert Storrie (S.A.)	Russell, Hon. Edward John (V.)
Guy, James (T.)	Senior, William (S.A.)
Henderson, George (W.A.)	Shannon, John Wallace (S.A.)
Keating, Hon. John Henry (T.)	Thomas, Hon. Josiah (N.S.W.)
* <sup>1</sup> Long, Hon. James Joseph (T.)	

<sup>1</sup> Appointed Temporary Chairman of Committees, 12th July, 1917.—\* Resignation reported, 20th December, 1918.

† Appointed by State Parliament, 15th January, 1919.—Sworn 26th June, 1919.



up the London front. It might be thought that I am challenging the High Commissioner's vote out of pique at my treatment, and I make this explanation to remove that impression. I challenge the vote because I would like to know what are the duties of the High Commissioner, and what is the use of his office. On my way home, I read the *Age* newspaper on this matter. Having referred to the various Ministers who are now at Home, it asked the same question. I admit that I am not aware what the High Commissioner's duties are, though I conceive that he acts diplomatically in regard to loans, the finances generally, and other Commonwealth business. When I was overseas, I saw that the Prime Minister had decided to stay in England for the express purpose of negotiating the sale of our wheat, wool, and metals, and to attend to demobilization, and with that in view, he wired to his constituents at Bendigo asking whether they were agreeable to his remaining. So far as I know, the honorable gentleman did not say that he had asked his colleagues whether he could be spared. In addition to him and the Minister for the Navy (Sir Joseph Cook), there is now the Minister for Defence (Senator Pearce) in London; and hence the press asks what the High Commissioner is there for. I think the expense of this office is rather extravagant, though I know it plays up to society. I do not wish to make a Bolshevik speech. The honorable member for Grampians (Mr. Jowett) shakes his head, but I know that if I, as a working man, went Home, and he were there at the same time, he would see much more of the Commissioner than myself. Australia is paying a most exorbitant price for a figure head, and this is not in accordance with the Democratic ideals of this country. All these expenses have to be met by the workers. It does not matter in which way we impose taxation, there is a process of filtration whereby it ultimately reaches the labourer, who cannot pass it on, and necessarily must pay. It is due to the Prime Minister to make a clear, plain statement of the functions and duties of the High Commissioner at Home. I do not say he does not fill an office necessary in some degree, but I think

he is simply a figure head for the social caste of Australia in Great Britain, and I think that when I express my opinion I am voicing the sentiments of those who sent me here. When Lord Jellicoe visited South Australia he attended a ball given by the Mayor of Adelaide, and I have to say that there were very few diggers there. I myself had not an invitation, because, perhaps, I do not come from the right political element. Every one was there who counted in society, and, above all, F. H. Snow, they tell me, was an invited guest. I do not cite this ball as an argument against the High Commissioner's office, but as a comparison and a contrast. Unless some justification can be given that will satisfy the working community, I think that the Chief Officer of the High Commissioner's office could do the work, as, in my opinion, he really does, while Mr. Fisher wears the rosettes.

Mr. WATT.—It was the representatives of the working community that appointed a High Commissioner.

Mr. YATES.—I admit that our party when in power did a lot of things which honorable members opposite say we did, and some of these things I should not have done myself. However, I commend the Labour Government for sending one of our own side Home, because it is so seldom that we have an opportunity to put any of our people into positions of the kind. The time may come again when we shall have to fill the position if it continues to exist, but that does not interfere with my argument that the position is not justified. As to the Prime Minister and the Minister for the Navy representing us at the Peace Conference, we were not over-represented by them if we had to be represented at all; and I hope their work will reflect credit on themselves, and be of benefit to Australia. It is not the time to argue about what they have done; but they have not done what I went to fight for. I went to get the blood of those who made the war, and to see that they were left to lament. However, none of the top-dogs have been killed up to now, though the Socialist leader, who stuck to his guns, went down, and is now kicking up the daisies. The whole question will have to be faced some time or other. The



Honorable member for Brisbane made out a good case; and whatever trouble does arise in Australia will come, not only from the industrial classes, but from the soldiers the promises to whom have not been honoured. But it will come without the bloodshed which has been witnessed in Russia, and we shall surely gain the beneficial results which those men fought for. Reverting to the High Commissioner and the "rosette" business—when we look at the whole of the cost set down it represents a tidy sum; and all for what purpose? If it were going to confer on Australia anything like an adequate return for the expenditure I would not criticise. But, on behalf of those who have to foot the bill, I call upon the Government to make clear exactly what the position is.

Mr. WATT (Balaclava—Acting Prime Minister and Treasurer) [11.17].—The Government are loth to control or limit discussion. I remind honorable members, however, that there will be an excellent opportunity following upon this debate, for a general discussion of the policy of the Government; I refer to the motion for the printing of the document containing the Ministerial proposals. If honorable members will assist the Government, we do not desire to avoid or abolish that debate. We want honorable members to have a reasonable chance to discuss the subjects therein referred to. But it should not be forgotten that, whatever Government may be in power, certain payments have to be met. There are no politics in a Supply Bill. If honorable members opposite were here on the Treasury benches—which God forbid—the honorable member for Capricornia (Mr. Higgs) or some one of his colleagues would now be trying to achieve what I am endeavouring to do, namely, to get money for the Public Service.

Mr. TUDOR.—And honorable members opposite us, who are now dumb, would be kicking up the biggest row with respect to the actions of those in power.

Mr. WATT.—No, they would not be doing that; they would be contributing to the education of those in occupation of

the Government benches, and, no doubt, would be doing so in that classical way that has distinguished them whenever they have chanced to be in opposition. There are certain payments due, whether we like it or not, next week; and I am quite willing to make this compact with honorable members, namely, that if before 3.30 p.m. to-morrow they will permit this Bill to go on to the Senate, so as to allow public credit to be met within the time requisite under the Audit Act, opportunity will be afforded for full discussion of Government business. I consent, therefore, now to the reporting of progress.

Progress reported.

### PAPERS.

The following papers were presented:—

Papua—Annual Report—For year 1917-18.

Ordered to be printed.

Sheepskins—British Imperial Government in account with Commonwealth Central Wool Committee for purchase of sheepskins, season 1917-18.

Public Service Act—Promotion of F. W. Arnold, Postmaster-General's Department.

House adjourned at 11.20 p.m.

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## Senate.

*Friday, 27 June, 1919.*

The PRESIDENT (Senator the Hon. T. Givens) took the chair at 11 a.m., and read prayers.

### BUTTER POOL.

PRICES CHARGED IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA.

Senator NEEDHAM.—I ask the Minister representing the Minister for Trade and Customs if his attention has been drawn to a telegram from Perth appearing in this morning's *Age* stating that merchants of that city are protesting against the charges for butter which are being made by the Federal Butter Board, and claiming that the Melbourne parity for the last two or three consignments should obtain. If so, will the Minister



take action to prevent the increased charges being made?

Senator RUSSELL.—I have not had my attention drawn to the telegram referred to, but if the honorable senator will let me have a copy of it I shall secure a reply for him at the earliest possible moment.

### RECOGNITION OF GALLANTRY.

Senator BAKHAP.—I ask the Leader of the Senate if he has any recollection of a matter I brought under his notice which had special reference to an act of gallantry performed by a Spanish officer named Suseata on a vessel captured by the German raider *Wolf*, and on which there were women and children? I understand that this officer's gallant act has been recognised by the British Board of Trade, but seeing that there were Australian women and children indebted to his gallantry, I have asked whether the Government purpose taking any action to recognise it.

Senator MILLEN.—My recollection of the matter is that, following upon the question submitted on the subject by the honorable senator, I informed him that the Government were then in communication with the Home authorities regarding the matter. As the honorable senator has again directed my attention to the matter, I shall ascertain what has been done.

Senator BAKHAP.—The British Board of Trade recognised this man's gallantry by presenting him with a silver cup. I think that the Commonwealth Government might give him an inscribed watch, or something of the sort.

### TRADE MARKS BILL.

Bill presented, and (on motion by Senator RUSSELL) read a first time.

### PAPUA.

#### DEVELOPMENT OF OIL FIELDS.

Senator McDougall.—I ask the Minister representing the Minister for Home and Territories if he will make available to the Senate any communications that have taken place between the

Commonwealth Government and the Imperial Government on the subject of the development of the oil fields of Papua?

Senator RUSSELL.—I shall bring the honorable senator's request under the notice of the Minister for Home and Territories, and shall let him know the result later on.

### MINISTERIAL STATEMENT.

Debate resumed from 26th June (*vide* page 10121), on motion by Senator MILLEN—

That the paper be printed.

Senator O'KEEFE (Tasmania) [11.10].

—When the debate was adjourned last evening I was referring to the question of shipping. I asked the Minister if he could give the Senate some assurance that ships belonging to the Commonwealth would, when their existing contracts had been completed, be employed entirely in connexion with the Australian trade, either between the States or between Australia and other countries. I understood Senator Russell to reply that the ships are to be kept here, and I should like to know whether that reply refers to the Commonwealth line of steamers, or in addition, to steamers privately owned and at present under the control of the Government.

Senator RUSSELL.—The policy has to be determined. Owing to the fact that the ships are worth elsewhere four times their value on the Australian coast, it will be considered by the Government.

Senator O'KEEFE.—Does the Minister refer to the Commonwealth line of steamers?

Senator RUSSELL.—To all ships.

Senator O'KEEFE.—I do not think that the Minister is intentionally obscure, but it must be remembered that when the War Precautions Act is out of the way, the control by the Commonwealth Government of privately owned shipping will cease. I take it, therefore, that the Minister's reply refers to ships entirely owned by the Commonwealth. Perhaps the Minister will say definitely whether that is so.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Shannon).—Order! The Standing Orders are distinctly against the honorable



senator seeking a reply to a question in the course of his speech.

Senator O'KEEFE.—We have been allowed by most Presidents to slightly transgress the Standing Orders to enable an honorable senator to obtain a reply to a question by an interjection from a Minister with the object of shortening debate. However, I bow to your ruling, sir, and I take it that the Minister's reply refers to all ships owned by the Commonwealth and over which the Government have absolute control. I understand that those ships are to be engaged in Australian trade.

Senator RUSSELL.—Does the honorable senator mean on the coast of Australia?

Senator O'KEEFE.—No; I mean on the coast of Australia—between State and State—and also in carrying Australian produce overseas and bringing cargo on the return voyage to Australia.

Senator RUSSELL.—That has always been done, except where boats have been requisitioned by the British Admiralty for war purposes. That practice will be continued.

Senator O'KEEFE.—The paragraph dealing with the matter in the Ministerial statement is somewhat vague, and leaves the impression that as bigger profits might be earned in other trading, the Government might consider the use of the Commonwealth steam-ships in other than Australian trade.

Senator RUSSELL.—No; the statement refers to privately owned boats under requisition.

Senator O'KEEFE.—That is the reply I wanted. Owing to the lamentable scarcity of shipping between the mainland and Tasmania, trade with that State has been disorganized, its producers have been ruined, its consumers are compelled to pay even higher rates for articles of daily necessity than the high rates obtaining on the mainland. Representations on the subject were made by the Premier of Tasmania two or three weeks ago, but so far no reply has been received. That is the usual thing, and I make the statement deliberately because the Acting Prime Minister took some weeks to reply to a most important business communication sent him by the Premier of Tasmania on behalf of the people of that State. The

request was made that, as soon as two of the ships could be released, one should be employed upon the trade between the mainland and Hobart, and the other between the mainland and Launceston. I trust that, even now, the Government will pay some heed to the request. Yesterday evening, when referring to the Federal and State quarantine regulations, and to Tasmania having neglected to comply with the Federal quarantine officials' requests, Senator Russell interjected, "The Tasmanian Government have refused to allow troops to land from a clean transport." I remarked that I was not aware of the incident.

Senator MULCAHY.—I do not think that the statement was correct.

Senator RUSSELL.—The point is that boats which were declared clean in Western Australia, South Australia, and Victoria still had to undergo quarantine in Tasmania.

Senator O'KEEFE.—I attended a large and united public meeting at Launceston; there were representatives of all parties present. Several motions were unanimously agreed to, the most important of which was to the effect that if a transport were clean, the Tasmanian quota on board should not be subjected to the additional and unnecessary risk of being sent into an infected port, but should be permitted to land direct on the northern coast of Tasmania.

Senator RUSSELL.—One of the troubles was that the boats were held up owing to the strike, and I refused to allow the soldiers to man them.

Senator O'KEEFE.—This was before the strike.

Senator RUSSELL.—The seamen's strike was over the quarantine conditions.

Senator O'KEEFE.—But I am referring to the situation before the strike. Tasmania was a clean State. Thank God, we were free of the scourge!

Senator RUSSELL.—And it is too big a thing to be made a party issue.

Senator O'KEEFE.—It has not been made a party issue.

Senator REID.—In some of the States it has been, anyhow.



Senator O'KEEFE.—Not in Tasmania. The public meeting held at Launceston forwarded its resolutions through the State Premier. The people of the island State requested that returning Tasmanian soldiers on clean transports should not be compelled to go to the infected port of Melbourne, but should be permitted to land at the mouth of the Tamar, or even at Burnie—whichever was the more convenient port for the ship.

Senator RUSSELL.—That was done during the height of the influenza outbreak, by special consent of the British Admiralty. The boats came into Port Phillip, but did not touch land. They went on to Tasmania before being despatched to Sydney or Brisbane. There was no contact at Melbourne.

Senator O'KEEFE.—That is a long while ago. I want to know why it has not been established as a continuous practice.

Senator RUSSELL.—I have held up a boat at the Heads, and picked up Tasmanians from at least ten transports, so that they should not become contacts at the infected port of Melbourne.

Senator O'KEEFE.—And they were taken to Hobart.

Senator RUSSELL.—Yes.

Senator O'KEEFE.—Why, then, has the practice been discontinued? For months past, Tasmanians have been urging simple and reasonable requests.

Senator RUSSELL.—I did not permit one soldier to be landed in an infected State when that could be avoided.

Senator O'KEEFE.—The fact remains that for months soldiers coming in on clean transports have been landed at the infected port of Melbourne, and have had to remain in this city for some weeks before being taken on to Tasmania.

I call attention to the remarkable lack of courtesy to the Tasmanian people displayed by the Federal Government and departmental authorities. It is strange that communications of such importance as we have despatched through the Premier of Tasmania to the Acting Prime Minister should not have received even the courtesy of a reply. Can Senator Russell supply a reason for that?

Tasmania has been affronted. For at least a fortnight after the despatch of urgent telegrams no replies have been received either from the Acting Prime Minister or from the head of the Department concerned. Such things impress the people of Tasmania with the conviction that their State does not count, seeing that it is so small. Had the usual custom been followed, namely, that of having a Minister representing Tasmania in the Government, such affronts would not have been inflicted. Why is there not a Minister representing Tasmania in the Cabinet? It has been an almost unbroken custom since the inauguration of Federation that every State should be given a direct voice in the counsels of the Cabinet; that, indeed, has become almost a law. And so it should be, so long as Federation exists and we do not go for Unification. Just prior to the close of last year the Government deemed it necessary to remove a Tasmanian Minister from the Cabinet. Why was not his place filled by another Tasmanian? There is only one answer, and I hardly care to express it, because it seems so sordid. There are at least three honorable senators in this Chamber, any one of whom is well able and worthy to represent Tasmania as a member of the Government. There are three Tasmanian members of the House of Representatives, two of whom are supporters of the Government, who have had Ministerial experience. Altogether, there are at least four Tasmanians in the Federal Parliament who are Government supporters and have held Ministerial office. Despite that fact, the Government deliberately refused to give a Tasmanian representative a place in their counsels, thus breaking through a custom which had hardened into almost law.

Senator MULCAHY.—It may have been a custom; it was not a rule.

Senator O'KEEFE.—Does the honorable senator admit that it is desirable?

Senator MULCAHY.—It is certainly desirable.

Senator O'KEEFE.—The custom was departed from, with the result that the interests of Tasmania have suffered more severely at the hands of the



present Government that in all our history since Federation. The reason is a sordid one. It can only be a matter of salary. There would be less money for the Ministers to divide among themselves if a new Minister were appointed to the vacancy from among the eligible Tasmanians. The Government have at least another year of life. Even at this late hour I appeal to them, in the interests of fair play, to appoint a Tasmanian to their ranks. If they did so, there would not then be any more Ministers than prior to the enforced retirement of Mr. Jensen. I understand that Admiral Clarkson is shipping controller but that he, in his turn, is controlled by the Shipping Board, the members of which are all heavily interested in privately-owned shipping.

Senator RUSSELL.—The Board is only advisory. Admiral Clarkson is the responsible individual.

Senator O'KEEFE.—If the Board is only an advisory body, and if its functions do not extend to the control of the shipping, what is it wanted for?

Senator MULCAHY.—It cannot be regarded as impartial.

Senator O'KEEFE.—Of course it cannot, because Admiral Clarkson is bound to take the advice of the Board and as human nature is human nature, it is natural that, if private shipping interests comes into conflict with other interests, they will certainly receive first consideration.

Senator RUSSELL.—All Australian ships have been requisitioned; there are no private boats running now.

Senator O'KEEFE.—I know that the whole of our vessels are under the control of Admiral Clarkson, but, as he has the assistance of the Advisory Board, what is the value of the Minister's answer?

Senator RUSSELL.—Australian ships are requisitioned at a certain price, and likewise British ships are requisitioned by the British Government. There is no private control to-day.

Senator O'KEEFE.—Exactly. They are requisitioned at a certain price, and advice is given as regards fares and times of sailings.

Senator RUSSELL.—But whatever advice is given, the owners cannot increase their revenue by one penny.

Senator O'KEEFE.—At all events, if the Advisory Board were not composed almost entirely of private shipping owners, there would be less uneasiness in the minds of the general public.

One paragraph in the Ministerial statement refers to the industrial unrest, and states that the seamen have, in fact, challenged the Government control. I stand to-day, as I have always stood, for the principle of arbitration, and I regret that this trouble was not referred to the Arbitration Court. I am also very pleased to know that the principle has found so many new recruits in Australia of late. Only a few months ago a section of the people, including strong supporters of the present Government in my own State, were doing their utmost to have the Arbitration Court abolished. They sent circulars to every Federal member requesting him to urge the Government to do away with the Court. These circulars were distributed in Tasmania on the eve of the State election, asking candidates if they were in favour of this course, and I believe a large number of Government supporters all over Australia were taking the same action.

Senator DE LARGIE.—Nonsense!

Senator O'KEEFE.—Senator de Largie's interjection is absolute nonsense. This circular is on record, though I do not say that the section represented by Senator de Largie were responsible for it.

Senator DE LARGIE.—No, nor any other section of the people in the State I come from, either.

Senator O'KEEFE.—Senator de Largie speaks of his own State only. His information does not extend to other parts of the Commonwealth. I am speaking of what is an actual fact, because the printed circulars are in existence.

Senator DE LARGIE.—But you included Western Australia in your statement.

Senator O'KEEFE.—I said that I believed the same action was being taken in the other States.



Senator Colonel ROWELL.—I think the fruit-growers were responsible for this movement.

Senator O'KEEFE.—Yes; I understand the circular was issued by the Farmers and Producers Association of Tasmania, asking candidates for the State Parliament to work in conjunction with members of the same party in the Federal Parliament to bring about the removal of the Arbitration Court. As a matter of fact, one of Senator de Largie's colleagues (Senator Earle), and, I believe, Mr. Laird Smith, attended the meeting in Launceston, and begged the association not to proceed along the lines indicated. I think that Senator Earle's argument was that if the Arbitration Court were wiped out, the people of Australia would be driven into the arms of the extremists.

Senator Colonel ROWELL.—I think their action had relation only to rural industries.

Senator O'KEEFE.—Perhaps so; but why remove only one industry from the jurisdiction of the Court? But these gentlemen suddenly became silent, and, strange as it may appear, we now find that a number of them are converts to the system of arbitration, which I and every other member of the Federal Labour party have always stood for. I do not know what reason actuates the seamen in their refusal to have anything to do with the Court.

Senator MULCAHY.—Have they been urged by the Federal members to approach it.

Senator O'KEEFE.—So far as I am concerned—and I speak only for myself—whenever I have come in contact with seamen, I have urged them to go to the Arbitration Court.

Senator BAKHAP.—But the seamen appear to be the slaves of some peculiar influence. They are all in favour of arbitration, and yet dare not go to the Court.

Senator O'KEEFE.—I do not know why they refuse; but I hope my honorable friend is not going to be a slave of the men who want to do away with that tribunal.

Senator BAKHAP.—The honorable senator knows my sentiments on that matter.

Senator O'KEEFE.—There must be some strong reason to determine the seamen not to accept the jurisdiction of the Arbitration Court; because I cannot believe that any large body of men would deliberately cut themselves off from their daily earnings and inflict misery upon their dependants unless they had pretty good reason.

Senator DE LARGIE.—Of course, they have a good reason—direct action. It is no use the honorable senator humbugging. He knows it.

Senator O'KEEFE.—Senator de Largie's interjection is humbug, and he knows it, too.

Senator DE LARGIE.—It is undeniably true.

Senator O'KEEFE.—Senator de Largie comes from the same class as I do. I have not forgotten, if he has, that it is their desire to reach out for a little larger portion of the good things of life. Will anybody say that that is wrong? Will Senator de Largie or anybody else say that the seamen have not terrible grievances to be remedied?

Senator MULCAHY.—A special tribunal was set up to remedy them, but they would not accept it.

Senator O'KEEFE.—I wish they had gone to that tribunal even although hitherto it has not given them all that they have asked for. God knows there have been too many obstacles in the way up to the present. It is the duty of the Government to make the path to the Arbitration Court as plain and smooth as possible. Lawyers ought to have been shut out of the Court altogether, for it has been as difficult for some of the organizations to get their cases heard as it is for a poor individual to get a case before the High Court of Australia.

Senator RUSSELL.—The Court certainly does want quickening up.

Senator O'KEEFE.—I am glad to have that admission from the Minister, because I recognise that the Arbitration Court has conferred many benefits on the workers, and I believe they would be well advised to continue along constitutional lines for the redress of their grievances, especially as, within the past few weeks,



there have been so many converts to the principle of arbitration.

Senator RUSSELL.—The seamen have not the excuse of delay now, because they were put into the Court by the Government. They would not accept its jurisdiction.

Senator O'KEEFE.—I am sorry they did not avail themselves of the opportunity. I really believe that the chief reason was that, in common with other organizations, they have become pretty well disgusted with the delays, as well as the expense, involved. No man who has gone down into the quarters which the seamen have to occupy can stand up on any platform in Australia and say that they have not grievances to be remedied. One's blood almost boils sometimes when one enters their quarters, though I admit that of late years some improvement has been made.

Senator LYNCH.—The improvements have been made in accordance with the Navigation Act.

Senator O'KEEFE.—The Navigation Act has not been proclaimed yet, and, consequently, ship-owners are not compelled to make the improvements.

Senator LYNCH.—The conditions are miles ahead of those provided in my time.

Senator MAUGHAN.—Still, they are rotten.

Senator LYNCH.—No. I suppose this interjection will be recorded against me later on, but I do not care whether it is or not. I say that the conditions are not to be compared with those provided in my time.

Senator O'KEEFE.—But Senator Lynch will admit that there is room for vast improvement even now.

Senator LYNCH.—I do not know. If the ships are fitted out in accordance with the provisions of the Navigation Act there is no room for improvement.

Senator MAUGHAN.—The majority are not. Has the honorable senator seen the accommodation provided?

Senator O'KEEFE.—I repeat that the Navigation Act has not been proclaimed yet; for some reason known only to the Government.

Senator DE LARGIE.—The reason is known to you, as well as to the Government.

Senator O'KEEFE.—I have always held that the Government had the power to have the Act proclaimed.

Senator DE LARGIE.—Then why did you not insist upon that being done when you were behind the Government? This Act has been suspended for many years.

Senator O'KEEFE.—I have not been behind any Government for the last three or four years, and the Navigation Act was passed only a short time before the outbreak of war. As evidence of the fact that the conditions have not been sufficiently improved in some of the vessels, I remind the Senate that a few months ago there was a strike of firemen on the *Loongana*, and one of the men told me that he would not return to work for three times the wages he had been getting if he had to face the same conditions on that vessel. I admit that she is probably a special ship, because she has been running at express speed all the time, so that perhaps the conditions under which her firemen work are worse than those which obtain on other vessels. Yet there was a general outcry against these men because they flouted the decision of the Arbitration Court.

Senator MULCAHY.—But the *Loongana* is not a new ship, and those conditions had existed for a long time without any complaints arising.

Senator O'KEEFE.—I know perfectly well that it is very difficult to retain firemen on the *Loongana*. I am familiar with the conditions under which they have to work.

Senator DE LARGIE.—The stokehold of the *Loongana* is not so very bad.

Senator O'KEEFE.—Probably there are others which are very much worse.

Senator DE LARGIE.—I do not consider the stokehold of the *Loongana* is a bad one at all. The vessel is well ventilated, anyhow.

Senator O'KEEFE.—Those who are familiar with the ship will admit that the conditions under which its firemen work are susceptible of vast improvement.



Coming to the question of profiteering, I note that one paragraph in the Ministerial statement reads—

With the exception of the control of a few commodities, respecting which contracts exist with the British Government, or financial obligations have been incurred by the Commonwealth, the Government has withdrawn the orders made under the Price Fixing Regulations, and has wound up the organization of the Prices Commissioners.

It was considered advisable to gradually release these restrictions, and thus allow trade and commerce to adapt itself to normal conditions, rather than continue this form of control to the date when our powers would automatically come to an abrupt termination.

It would have been better for the people of this country if those restrictions had been continued in respect of many articles of daily consumption. For example, immediately the Government removed the embargo on the export of leather the price of boots went up by 25 and even 50 per cent. As a result, the working man who had previously to pay 4s. 6d. to get his boots half-soled is now required to pay 6s.

Senator FAIRBAIRN.—That is a matter which ought to be looked into.

Senator O'KEEFE.—It ought to be more than looked into. Those who are guilty of this sort of profiteering, and who seek to make fortunes out of the necessities of the people at a time like the present, should almost be stood up against a wall and shot. No owner of a pound of leather in this country should have been allowed to export it until the people were able to purchase that commodity at a reasonable price. Yet the Government, with a full knowledge of what would happen, removed the embargo on the export of leather.

Senator DE LARGIE.—The honorable senator's own side was always howling for the repeal of war restrictions.

Senator O'KEEFE.—The members of our party desired only the repeal of the War Precautions Act in regard to the censorship. If they howled at all they howled for the retention of those powers which were designed to prevent profiteering. The direct result of the action of Mr. Massy Greene was an increase of up to 50 per cent. in the price of an article which everybody has to use. As a consequence, the children of the poorer classes

to-day are obliged to go barefooted. I know of one establishment in my own State which, prior to the removal of the embargo on leather, was filled almost to the roof with hides and leather. The owner of these articles seemed to be in possession of information as to the Government's intention, and accordingly refused to sell a single hide or a solitary pound of leather to the bootmakers who required it. He openly proclaimed that he was holding for a higher price. When he was asked why he would not allow the bootmakers to have the leather they required he said that the embargo upon the export of leather would soon be removed, and that the moment it was removed the price of that article would go up.

Senator DE LARGIE.—Is the honorable senator prepared to give that man's name, because he ought to be held up to public obloquy?

Senator O'KEEFE.—Why should he be held up to public obloquy any more than another profiteer?

Senator DE LARGIE.—Because his is an explicit case which ought to be known.

Senator O'KEEFE.—Dozens of similar cases could be cited. I do not blame him for his action any more than I blame the holder of another commodity who was guilty of the same practice. But I do blame the system.

Senator DE LARGIE.—Let us know who he is.

Senator O'KEEFE.—The embargo has been removed. Under the law, what action could be taken against him? He had as much right to make increased profits as had any other individual.

Senator MULCAHY.—The Government should have commandeered the material, and should have paid a fair price for it.

Senator O'KEEFE.—Undoubtedly. This is one concrete instance in which the action of the Government was of direct assistance to profiteering.

Senator DE LARGIE.—The honorable senator has not yet given the man's name.

Senator O'KEEFE.—And I am not going to give it to the honorable senator publicly, although I am prepared to supply him with it privately.

Senator DE LARGIE.—I want it for public use.



Senator O'KEEFE.—Why select one man in this connexion any more than another? I suppose that this individual's sin, grievous though it was, was a small one compared with that of many other profiteers engaged in the same line of business on the mainland.

I come now to the question of finance as outlined in the statement of Ministerial policy. The statement contains only a vague reference to it, but we all know that one of the financial proposals of the Ministry, as set out in the newspapers a few months ago, is a reduction of the *per capita* allowance to the States. The Acting Prime Minister publicly announced that he intended to propose a reduction in the present allowance of 25s. annually, by 2s. 6d. per year for a period of six years, at the end of which time it would be permitted to remain at 10s. for a further period of five years, when it would be again subject to review. I desire to point out that if the *per capita* allowance be reduced, Tasmania will be placed in a very serious financial position indeed. Not only is she dependent on that allowance, but for some years she has been in receipt of a special grant from the Commonwealth of £90,000 annually. That special grant will cease to operate in 1922, and unless she receives some consideration in lieu of it, if the *per capita* allowance be reduced in accordance with the scheme foreshadowed by the Government, her financial position will be greatly embarrassed. I intend to wait till I know the exact proposals of the Treasurer, but if they are as outlined by him in a speech which he delivered at the end of January last, I shall certainly be found opposing them.

I am very glad to note that the Government intends to introduce a new Tariff. I hope that it will be a scientific Tariff, which, while offering more encouragement to existing Australian industries, will seek to promote the creation of new industries. I am anxious to give that amount of protection to Australian industries which their importance demands, and I believe that such a Tariff as I have indicated will prove acceptable to a majority in both branches of the Legislature, and will constitute a great im-

provement upon our present Tariff. Unless we develop to the fullest extent the great natural resources of the country, we shall be up against serious financial trouble in the future.

Senator Lt.-Colonel O'LOUGHLIN.—What about protecting the consumers and workmen?

Senator O'KEEFE.—I spoke of a "scientific" Tariff, by which term I mean a Tariff that will pay due attention to the needs of the consumers, and also of those who are engaged in the industries that receive protection. No other form of protection will command my support.

Senator NEEDHAM (Western Australia) [11.58].—The Ministerial statement which we are discussing is a very interesting one in many ways. The first paragraph in it affirms that, until the protracted deliberations of the Peace Conference were approaching finality, it was considered inadvisable to summon the Houses for the discussion of public business. I can only describe that statement by using the well-worn war word, "camouflage." I do not think the deliberations of the Peace Conference were responsible for the long recess we have had—which has covered a period of well nigh six months. I say, without fear of contradiction, that had it not been necessary for the Government to obtain Supply in order to enable them to carry on the services of this country, we should not have been called together even now. There is an old saying that "Needs must when the devil drives," and the devil is driving the Government at this period of the year because of their need of money. They have spent public money to the limit of their authority in carrying on the public service, and it was only when they required further authority that they called Parliament together. It would have been better if Parliament had been called together earlier.

It is a pity that the Parliaments of any of the Allied countries should have been in recess during the sittings of the Peace Conference, and it is a still greater pity that the Parliaments of those countries have not been made aware of the proceedings at the Conference. Shortly after the



outbreak of the world-war, we were told that one of the causes of the world being plunged into that awful abyss was secret diplomacy. We were assured that the days of secret diplomacy had ended. But they have not ended. The Peace Conference has continued secret diplomacy. I am sure that the members of this Parliament do not know, and I believe that the members of the Parliaments of the other Allied countries do not know, what the deliberations of the Big Four have been. The proceedings of the Conference have been conducted in secret. Agreements have been made during the last four months under the old system of secret diplomacy. There is, it should be said, one exception in connexion with the proceedings of the Peace Conference. President Wilson did on one occasion throw aside the veil of secrecy hanging over its proceedings in connexion with the Italian demand for Fiume. That was the only break in the secret system. President Wilson did inform the world of what Italy was claiming. It was not because of the deliberations of the Peace Conference that this Parliament has been called together, but because the Government want money, and they must come to this Parliament to get it.

We were told at the outbreak of the war that we entered it for one purpose, and for one purpose only—and that was to protect the rights of small nations. We were told that there was no idea of territorial conquest—small nations were to be given the right of self-determination, and the Allied countries did not intend to take any territory. Time has proved that such was not their intention, or, if it was, that it has not been carried out. There is a small nation I know of—not very far from England itself—that has not yet been given the right of self-determination. The blood of her sons has flowed and mingled on the battlefields of France and Gallipoli with the blood of men from other Allied countries, but that small nation is to-day as far from securing the right of self-determination as it ever was, notwithstanding the fact that the world has been drenched in blood, as we have been told, in order that the right of self-determination should be preserved to small nations. It was thought that at

the Peace Conference—which is still sitting—the claims of that land—I refer to Ireland—would have been put forward by representatives of the Allied nations. But that has not been done—there is no intention to do it, and that small nation is to-day as far from realizing its ambition as it ever has been.

Senator O'KEEFE.—As a result Ireland is seething with discontent.

Senator NEEDHAM.—To-day Ireland is more discontented under British rule than ever she was before. No man dare say that her sons, Irish born and Irish bred, and the sons of Irish parents in every country of the Allied nations, did not respond to the call when the tocsin of war sounded. As I have said, their blood has flowed on the battlefields to which I have referred. I therefore repeat that the promise of self-determination for small nations has not been fulfilled, so far as one part of our Empire is concerned.

Another promise made upon our entry into the war was that no territorial conquest was intended by the Allied countries. Judging by telegrams which appear in the newspapers, and the scraps of information we are given as to the proceedings at the Peace Conference, it has been one continual battle for territorial conquest. Italy wanted Fiume, Japan wanted Shantung; America stuck to her Monroe doctrine; Britain would not allow her foreign agreements to be interfered with by the League of Nations; and we have had mandatories of all kinds proposed. The only places about which there has been no question are the Arctic and Antarctic regions. Apparently no one wanted them. From what we can gather from the cables, there have been continual battles for territory at the Peace Conference. The result of the Peace Treaty so far as Japan is concerned, in giving that country control of Shantung, has been to provide another Alsace-Lorraine difficulty for the future. The people of Shantung were not permitted to determine for themselves whether they would come under Japanese rule or not, as they should have been in accordance with one of President Wilson's fourteen points, to which Mr. Lloyd George agreed. They have been handed over to Japan.



So far as we in Australia are concerned, we have another matter to be anxious about, and this is the preservation of our White Australia policy. A fight was put up at the Peace Conference to preserve that policy, but a big fight was also put up against it, and to a great extent those opposed to our White Australia policy have won. Japan claimed racial equality, and although that has not been granted to its fullest extent, we are informed that before the Peace Conference assembled there was an agreement between the Government of that country and the Imperial Government that the Marshall and Caroline Islands were to be ceded to Japan. Why was not this Parliament informed of that? Is there any member of the Senate who will say that that is not a danger to Australia and a menace to our White Australia policy?

Senator LYNCH.—I thought the honorable member's party did not want annexations?

Senator BAKHAP.—Those islands are on the other side of the Equator. So long as we get the previous German possessions on this side of the Equator I am satisfied.

Senator NEEDHAM.—In answer to Senator Lynch, I may say that I am giving my own views now.

Senator Lt.-Colonel O'LOUGHLIN.—The Equator would appear to be a line of defence.

Senator NEEDHAM.—Yes, according to Senator Bakhap, it is a very strong line of defence.

Senator BAKHAP.—Why not include the Philippine Islands or Formosa, if you must go north of the Equator?

Senator NEEDHAM.—I say that in the agreement to which I have referred there is danger, and we shall need to be on the alert.

Senator MULCAHY.—We cannot carry our White Australia policy all over the world.

Senator NEEDHAM.—Whether the agreement be right or wrong, and I believe it is wrong, this Parliament and the people of this country should have been apprised of it. This is one of the reasons why I say that even now, after all the blood that has been shed, we are not yet out of the woods. We were told that this was to be the last war, but I am

very much afraid that before another ten years are over our heads we shall be into another war, perhaps as big as that we have just come through.

I have to-day given notice of a motion in connexion with the cost of communications between the Government and three Ministers who are now in London. I wish to give my reason for desiring that information. It is a most remarkable thing that two of the leading members of the Government should have been absent in Great Britain for so long a period, and that a third should recently have been sent there. It must have cost a considerable amount of money to keep in direct contact with those Ministers in connexion with the doings of the Peace Conference, and the other matters which they have in hand overseas. Furthermore, so far as the Peace Conference is concerned, I do not think that it was necessary that two Ministers should be sent to represent us at that Conference.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Shannon).—Did I understand the honorable senator to say that he has given notice of a motion on this subject? If he has put a notice on the paper dealing with it, he is not in order in discussing it now.

Senator NEEDHAM.—There is no such notice on the paper. The paper in which it will appear has not yet been printed.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT.—I understand that the honorable senator has given notice of the motion.

Senator NEEDHAM.—I venture to say that until my notice of motion is printed, I can give my reasons for submitting it.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT.—I am only taking the honorable senator's word for it.

Senator NEEDHAM.—You, sir, can take my word for it, or leave it alone. My notice of motion is not before the Senate, and therefore is not the property of the Senate. I thought you knew the Standing Orders better.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT.—Order!  
Senator LYNCH.—No reflections on the Chair.



Senator NEEDHAM.—It was not on the Chair I was reflecting, if I made any reflection at all. I say that it is quite right that Australia should be represented at the Peace Conference by the Prime Minister of the day, no matter who he may be. But I think that it is extra and unnecessary expense to the country to have at the same time another prominent member of the Government representing us there.

Senator LYNCH.—There were two representatives from little New Zealand.

Senator NEEDHAM.—I cannot speak for New Zealand. I am giving my opinion as to how Australia should have been represented.

In the Ministerial statement there is a great deal of window-dressing. The political window-dresser has been very busy, and has provided a very fair show. He must be a real political artist. If any honorable senator believes that all the legislative items enumerated are to become law before this Parliament expires, he must be an even more optimistic type of gentleman than the individual alluded to by Senator Gardiner yesterday. In paragraph 2 of the Ministerial announcement, the following information is provided—

It will be noted with pleasure that the demobilization and return of our Armies is now proceeding, notwithstanding the inherent difficulties, swiftly and satisfactorily.

Up to 31st May, 1919, approximately 169,000 members of the Australian Imperial Force had returned to Australia; 3,300 had been discharged at their own request overseas; 18,000 were *en route* to Australia; leaving about 79,000 still to be repatriated. If the present shipping provision is maintained, all our troops, except the Depôt and Headquarters Staffs, will have embarked for Australia by the end of next month.

The success which is attending this great task amply confirms the steps taken by the Government in placing the work in the hands of a responsible Minister in London.

There is no greater example of deliberate waste of public money than is provided by sending Home a responsible Minister in connexion with the demobilization of our troops. At the time of Senator Pearce's departure from Australia, the Prime Minister (Mr. Hughes) and the Minister for the Navy (Sir Joseph Cook) were both in London. In addition,

General Sir John Monash had been appointed Director-General of Demobilization. Further, there was the High Commissioner—not to mention his staff. Could not our troops have been swiftly and efficiently demobilized under the careful and able supervision of one man—and that man a proved fighting soldier—without requiring any Minister to be in London at all? Even if the Director-General of Demobilization had not been appointed, could not the High Commissioner have carried out the work? But the High Commissioner and his staff, in their costly Australia House, could not look after the return of our soldiers! Neither could the Prime Minister do so, nor the Minister for the Navy! The Director-General of Demobilization could not do so! The Minister for Defence had to be sent to London to demobilize the troops. Senator Pearce reached London on the 19th March.

Senator DE LARGIE.—And he has done good work while there. No demobilization in the world has been performed in a better way, perhaps.

Senator NEEDHAM.—I asked yesterday for the date of the departure of Senator Pearce, and the reply was that it was the 26th January last. I asked how many members of the Australian Imperial Force had returned to Australia at that date. The reply was, 96,854. I inquired how many were *en route* to Australia at that date, and was informed that the approximate total was 24,780. I desired to know the date of the arrival of Senator Pearce in London as Minister for Demobilization. It was given as the 19th March, 1919. I wanted to know how many members of the Australian Imperial Force had returned or were *en route* to Australia at that date, and I was furnished with the information that 121,634 had come back to Australia, and that 16,120 were *en route*, making a total of 137,754. On the 31st May, 169,000 of our troops had arrived in Australia, and 18,000 were on the way home. After all, therefore, Senator Pearce had been responsible for the return of only about 50,000 men to the end of last month. If we take the total



of 137,754 from the sum of the men who have been and are to be demobilized, we ascertain that a little more than half had either arrived in Australia or were on their way back before the Minister reached England. I am not referring to Senator Pearce in any personal sense, good, bad, or indifferent.

Senator BAKHAP.—He has been Minister for Defence during a victorious war, anyhow.

Senator NEEDHAM.—I am not reflecting upon his capacity. But there was no need to send him Home to demobilize our troops.

Senator DE LARGIE.—That was part and parcel of his duties.

Senator NEEDHAM.—If that were so, he should have sailed for London immediately upon the declaration of the armistice. But before he got there nearly 140,000 of our troops had been demobilized. Senator de Largie says the Minister has done good work since reaching London. I differ from that view. While Senator Pearce was on his way to England as Minister for Demobilization, and during his stay in South Africa, Mr. Hughes was castigating the British Government for not giving sufficient ships to General Monash, in order to get our troops back expeditiously; and it was as the outcome of the persistent representations of Mr. Hughes, seconded by those of Sir John Monash, that extra ships were supplied, at the command of Mr. Lloyd George, by the head of the Shipping Board.

Senator MILLEN.—Does not the honorable senator recognise that he is now saying something complimentary of the Prime Minister?

Senator NEEDHAM.—I have not sunk to the level which Senator Millen insinuates. I have always given credit where credit was due. I admit that I have said something in praise of the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth. It is only buttressing my argument that there was no necessity to put this country to the cost of sending Senator Pearce to London. I asked yesterday for the cost of sending the Minister and his family to England, and the answer stated £275.

Senator BAKHAP.—It was up to him to have a holiday after the war.

Senator NEEDHAM.—I want to leave that entirely out of the question. Senator Pearce was sent to London for one express purpose. I question the accuracy of the total furnished by way of reply to my inquiry, namely, that the cost of sending Senator Pearce and his family Home was only £275. Shipping companies are charging very high rates for passages to London. No one can secure a first class passage, I should say, under £100.

Senator PRATTEN.—For £68.

Senator NEEDHAM.—That is not so. A friend of mine who had to leave Melbourne for London paid £85 for a single fare.

Senator PRATTEN.—They are now booking for £68.

Senator NEEDHAM.—I am speaking of the conditions ruling in January last. In Senator Pearce's party there were six people, four of whom, I understand, were adults. Could they have been transported to London for £275? I call attention, also, to a statement in the press that it cost nearly £100 to establish an office on the ship for the Minister. That £100 could not have been included in the £275. I will certainly not accept those figures. There was no need to send Senator Pearce to London. If it were deemed necessary that, as the result of four and a half years' strain of office as Minister for Defence, he ought to have a holiday, why should not that fact have been frankly stated? No man would have objected. But I object to Senator Pearce having been sent across the world for an absolutely unnecessary reason.

In connexion with demobilization, I may refer to another matter. I notice that the Prime Minister appointed Mr. Heitmam, M.P. for Kalgoorlie, inspector of troopships shortly after that gentleman's arrival in London, and that he also appointed Lieutenant Burchell to look after men who desired to remain in England engaged in different occupations. Those appointments savour too much of favours to Government supporters. These gentlemen may have been



eminently suited for the work, but I think it is quite likely that, out of the thousands of soldiers then in London, from France, two could have been found equally capable of discharging those duties. There would then have been some small recognition of work done by soldiers. I do not believe in giving these spoils, if they are spoils, to the gentlemen referred to. As a matter of fact, I am very much surprised, seeing the Prime Minister was working in that direction, that Sir John Monash got his position. I am surprised that Lieutenant Burchell, or perhaps Mr. Ryan, M.L.A., did not get the post of Director-General of Demobilization.

Senator PRATTEN.—Do you suggest that there is any pay attached to the positions you refer to?

Senator NEEDHAM. — I am not speaking of pay at all; but I venture to say that these gentlemen are not doing the work without remuneration, nor could it be expected of them. To my mind, it is not the right thing to do.

I come now to another matter in connexion with repatriation. I remind the Minister that some time ago I had interviews, in Perth, with several returned soldiers who desired to embark in the fishing industry. They were anxious to get assistance from the State Board of Repatriation, in order to purchase boats to start fishing on the north-west coast and elsewhere. They were not successful in their application, but since then I have made representations to the Central Board, and I believe the matter is now under consideration. We could very well assist returned soldiers in this industry, because fish is dear, it is a very necessary food, and it is not within the reach of the working class section of our community. It is well known that, in Western Australia, at all events, a ring defies competition, and therefore money could very well be spent to encourage our returned soldiers to enter into this business.

So far as I have gone, I have been condemnatory in my remarks; but I turn now to paragraph 6 of the Ministerial statement, and find that the Government

have not yielded to the demands of the Imperial Shipping Ring, which threatened to extinguish the competition created by the Commonwealth line of steamers. I hope the Government will hold fast to their determination to increase their fleet, and engage not only in trade and commerce, but also in the carrying of our mails to and from Australasia and round our coast-line. I compliment the Government on their determination to continue the Commonwealth line of steamers.

Paragraph 7 deals with the Naval Bases and the visit of Lord Jellicoe. Right from the start I have condemned the action of the Government in arbitrarily closing down work on the Naval Base at Fremantle. I described it as nothing more nor less than a political job, because that work was regarded by Admiral Henderson as the primary Base for Australia. The evidence taken by the Public Works Standing Committee also strengthened this opinion. Naval witnesses before that Committee stated that they were in constant and recent touch with the Admiralty, and that the advice received was that the work should continue. But shortly after we presented our report the Government determined to close down the works and bring out an expert from Home to further report on the whole question of naval defence. This was needless expense. It was not necessary to bring Lord Jellicoe nor anybody else to Australia, because, as I have shown, the naval authorities in Melbourne were in constant touch with the Admiralty, who advised that the work should be continued.

Senator PRATTEN.—You are arguing that the naval conditions of 1919 are the same as 1911.

Senator NEEDHAM.—I am not arguing anything of the sort. I am speaking of the report of the inquiry held in 1918.

Senator MILLEN.—By whom?

Senator NEEDHAM. — The Public Works Committee. I think we presented our report in May, and a couple of months later the Government closed down, because some members of this Parliament were preaching economy.



Since then they have brought out Lord Jellicoe and his staff to report on the whole subject.

Senator REID.—Suppose Lord Jellicoe makes some other recommendation?

Senator NEEDHAM.—I do not know what Lord Jellicoe will do. I am only speaking of the evidence tendered by the naval experts of this country on oath before the Committee referred to.

In paragraph 8 mention is made of Commonwealth expenditure and the work of the Royal Commission which has been inquiring into this subject. That Commission has been sitting for a long time now, but, so far, we have not heard the result of their deliberations, though we have heard something about the Treasurer using some sort of meat axe on the Departments, in order to cut down expenditure.

Senator BAKHAP.—Who is going to be the chopping block?

Senator NEEDHAM.—I am wondering.

Paragraph 11 of the Ministerial statement refers to the Navigation Act. I agree with Senator O'Keefe that, if this Act had been in operation to-day, it would have gone a long way to prevent the present unfortunate maritime dispute. Even now, if the Government proclaimed the measure, and brought in the necessary amendments subsequently, the situation would be greatly improved. I have said from the start that, in my opinion, the seamen were wrongly advised. They should have taken a ballot, which, I believe, would have given a majority in favour of arbitration. But it is no use now speaking about things that have happened. The damage has been done, and I think the Government should not any longer continue their present attitude. They say, through the Acting Prime Minister, that the seamen have broken the laws, and have challenged the Government, and, they having done that, the Government will not now interfere.

Senator REID.—Hear, hear!

Senator NEEDHAM.—The honorable senator says, "Hear, hear!" We must remember, however, that large numbers

of innocent women and children are suffering acutely as the result of this dispute.

Senator REID.—The Arbitration Court is waiting for the men.

Senator NEEDHAM.—That is all very well. What is the good of the Government maintaining this attitude? Surely some attempt might now be made to get the representatives of both sides together, with the Government as an intermediary?

Senator BAKHAP.—Does not the honorable senator think that if every Federal Labour member sent a letter, advising these men to go to the Arbitration Court, it would have some effect?

Senator NEEDHAM.—I am not in a position to answer that question. I do not know if the seamen would accept the decision of the Arbitration Court. I am only giving my opinion as to what should have been done at the outset. Unfortunately, it was not done, and the problem now is to so arrange matters as to start the wheels of industry again. One means of achieving this object is to proclaim the Navigation Act or, at all events, that portion which deals with the manning scale and the conditions of labour on the ships. It is well known that the majority of the vessels trading on our coast to-day do not offer seamen the conditions they would be entitled to under the Navigation Act.

Senator BAKHAP.—Let them go back to work, and we will see if we cannot get the Government to do it to-morrow.

Senator NEEDHAM.—The Government have said that, these men having defied the law, they do not intend now to interfere. But I can quote an instance of the Government themselves flouting the law in connexion with arbitration proceedings: I refer to the reduction from 12s. 6d. to 11s. per day of the wages paid to temporary clerks in Perth. These men had their case pending before the Arbitration Court under the Public Service Arbitration Act when the Government reduced their wages by 1s. 6d. per day. If that was not a flouting of the law, I do not know what the word means. This reduction of 1s. 6d.



per day affected many returned soldiers who had served two or three years in France and at Gallipoli.

Senator LYNCH.—Were not those men offered arbitration?

Senator NEEDHAM.—They had their case pending in the Arbitration Court.

Senator LYNCH.—Were they not offered arbitration and did they not refuse it?

Senator NEEDHAM.—These men had their case before the Court, and whilst it was pending the Government defied the laws of this country by reducing their wages. They then attempted to break the strike by sending ten clerks from Melbourne to Perth to take the places of the strikers.

Senator LYNCH.—How many were on strike?

Senator NEEDHAM.—Including men and women, there were something like 150 hands on strike.

Senator LYNCH.—They must have been ten miracle-workers if they were able to take the places of 150 strikers.

Senator NEEDHAM.—But they comprised only a portion of those who were to be sent to Perth. The Government intended to send more. These clerks went to Perth, but they never put their pens to paper. I was informed by a very high officer in the Prime Minister's Department that it was the intention of the Government to break the strike. I met him one day and he asked me, "What about this strike?" I told him what I thought of it, and he then said, "We are going to break it. We intend to send men to Perth until it is broken."

Senator LYNCH.—The men should not have gone on strike at all.

Senator NEEDHAM.—They went on strike because their wages were reduced whilst their case was pending in the Arbitration Court.

Senator LYNCH.—Why did they not go on with their case?

Senator NEEDHAM.—I know what Senator Lynch would have done in similar circumstances. He would not have gone on with his case.

Senator LYNCH.—We never went on strike whilst we had a case pending in the Court.

Senator NEEDHAM.—Because the honorable senator's wages were never reduced whilst he had a case pending in the Court.

Senator MILLEN.—If those clerks would go back to work I offered, on behalf of the Government, to do everything possible to expedite a decision in their case, and to make the award of the Arbitration Court retrospective.

Senator NEEDHAM.—But the Government reduced their wages whilst their case was pending in the Court.

Senator MILLEN.—I deny that absolutely.

Senator NEEDHAM.—The Minister for Repatriation may deny it, but the facts are against him.

Senator DE LARGIE.—The facts are against the honorable senator's statement.

Senator NEEDHAM.—Then let the Minister disprove them.

Senator MILLEN.—I will endeavour to do so.

Senator NEEDHAM.—It will take the honorable gentleman all his time. I note that the Ministerial statement records the disappearance of the Price Fixing Regulations. In any circumstances they were of no use. The prices of commodities were continually rising notwithstanding those regulations. But there still remains the increased cost of living to be dealt with.

Senator LYNCH.—What about the cost of dying?

Senator NEEDHAM.—I hope that it will be a long time before either the honorable senator or myself dies. The world needs us both for a long while yet. Right at the root of the industrial unrest in Australia is the constant increase in the cost of living. We are not to be disillusioned by persons who would endeavour to persuade us that Australia is the only country in which industrial unrest obtains. All over the world similar conditions are apparent.

Senator Colonel ROWELL.—How can we deal with it?

Senator NEEDHAM.—If we enact laws to prevent men raising the prices of commodities to such an extent that they derive profits of from 40 per cent. to 50 per cent., we shall at least have taken one step towards the solution of the difficulty.



Senator BAKHAP.—Do not be quite sure of that.

Senator Colonel ROWELL.—Who is getting those profits?

Senator NEEDHAM.—My honorable friend knows perfectly well that in Australia to-day certain individuals are making exorbitant profits at the expense of the poorer classes of the community.

Senator Colonel ROWELL.—You can buy goods cheaper here than you can in London.

Senator NEEDHAM.—That may be so. But two wrongs do not make a right.

Senator Colonel ROWELL.—I have bought boots here for 25s., whereas in London I had to pay 35s. for them.

Senator NEEDHAM.—I know of plenty of families in which the children are obliged to go bare-footed because of the price of boots. Moreover, the fathers of these children are unable to provide them with meat.

Senator LYNCH.—I went bare-footed when I was a child, and it is the best thing I ever did.

Senator NEEDHAM.—Perhaps the honorable senator had to do it. But that sort of thing should not obtain in Australia.

I come now to the detention of Paul Freeman. I say unhesitatingly that it is the duty of the Government to publish the nature of this man's crime. When they have done that, they should immediately grant him a public trial. Nobody can justify the continued detention of Freeman without a charge being preferred against him and without giving him a public trial.

Senator Colonel ROWELL.—The honorable senator might say that about a thousand men.

Senator NEEDHAM.—I have always said it. No man or woman should be kept in durance vile without being charged, and without being given a public trial.

I am glad to learn that the Government intend to seriously tackle the question of the Tariff. It is extremely necessary that the present Tariff should be revised. Australia, like other parts of the world, is about to undergo a period of reconstruction. We have thousands of men returning from the battle-field, and we are faced with a huge public debt. We must estab-

lish industries to provide the money with which to pay interest upon the debt. We must become an exporting rather than an importing country. I have always been a pronounced Protectionist. I regret that our Constitution does not permit of the benefits of Protection being extended alike to the worker and consumer. When the Tariff is submitted for our consideration, I intend to exert my best endeavours in the direction of insuring that the men and women who are engaged in protected industries, and also the consumers, shall receive fair consideration along with the manufacturer.

*Sitting suspended from 1 to 2.30 p.m.*

Senator BAKHAP (Tasmania) [2.30].—As more than six months have elapsed since Parliament last met, and as many international and Australian events of importance have transpired during that time, it is quite natural that members of the Senate should feel inclined to unburden themselves of some opinions with regard to those events, more particularly as at the present moment they are not likely to be accused of wasting time, since there are not very many matters immediately ready for our consideration. I shall trespass upon the consideration of honorable senators by making a few allusions to certain features of the Ministerial statement. I promise not to attempt to allude to every paragraph in it, because it is of considerable length, and were I to do so I would inflict upon honorable senators a speech not of half an hour, or three-quarters of an hour, but of several hours in length.

Although as yet the position with regard to the signing of Peace seems to be somewhat indeterminate, I venture to hope that we shall have news of that happy consummation during the next few days. The world undoubtedly desires peace, although there is a good deal happening at the present time throughout the world that is not of a peaceful character. I, as an Australian, say that Australia has nothing to gain from a state of war, and that, in the interests of this country, the sooner peace comes the better. One of our own poets has said that we are the only nation "from the womb of peace," that is to say, we are the only people, so to speak, born in peace, and, therefore,



we should hope that our future will be one of peaceful development rather than of war-like enterprise. Of course, we have lately placed ourselves in a very prominent position in the eyes of the world by the assistance which we have properly and rightly rendered to the Empire, because the cause of the Empire was the cause of liberty, democracy, and humanity.

Some reference is made in the statement to the League of Nations. Despite the criticism which has been levelled at the present plan of the League of Nations, I hope that it will be consummated, because I believe that, imperfect though its present provisions may be, it will make for peace. Australia, I think, requires, above all, half a century of peaceful development. With that, and the increase in population necessary to cope with our colossal and continental needs, I venture to say that the troubles of the outside world will not unduly affect the Australia of our posterity. If we are to have future wars, I do not think that Australia will be really safe until she has a population of at least 20,000,000 or 30,000,000.

Senator MULCAHY.—And we are doing nothing to bring that about.

Senator BAKHAP.—I am sorry to say that we are not doing a great deal. There must be a social and moral regeneration of our people before the population of Australia can be augmented to the degree I consider necessary.

Senator MULCAHY.—And a change in our policy.

Senator BAKHAP.—And, perhaps, a change in our policy, as the honorable senator suggests.

Mr. Hughes has done a great deal in directions which have my personal approval, and I am altogether in accord with the sentences in the Ministerial statement which acclaim the Prime Minister for the very great work he has effected in advancing Australia's interests at the Peace Conference and in the European arena generally.

I have said that the League of Nations does not meet with all-round approval. It evidently does not meet with universal approval, even in America, the President of which country is held to be one of the great moving spirits in regard to the

League of Nations. But imperfect though the covenant in embryo may be, I believe it will be found singularly effective in securing for the world a period of peace which is vitally essential to the development of Australia. I know that human nature does not change very easily, and I do not agree to the dictum that any League can altogether prevent the possibility of future wars. I am inclined to be more severely practical in regard to that desirable objective. I believe the main factor in preventing future wars will be found to be the probable terrible destructiveness of war. When I read the other day that there were, about the time of the conclusion of the armistice, 100 American balloons loaded with a terrible explosive or poison called Lewisite invented by an American professor, which would practically extinguish all animal, vegetable, and insect life on the areas upon which it might be dropped, I said that, terrible though the explosive might be in its effect, the fact of its existence might, perhaps, bring about a state of peace and amity between nations more readily than would the proposed League of Nations itself. I believe that war, as we understand it, will not be eliminated from the world until the people of the world recognise that a small nation in possession of scientific knowledge, which may be the world's common property, will be able to destroy a large nation as readily as a large and aggressive nation might destroy a small one.

Senator MILLEN.—A question of getting in first.

Senator BAKHAP.—Yes. If an Empire or nation with a large population is aware of the fact that the resources of civilization of an intensely destructive character are at the disposal of a small community, as well as at its own disposal, then, in my opinion, aggression, and many of the evils which have hitherto afflicted humanity, will probably have a period put to them.

I sincerely hope, as an Australian, and as a human being, that we shall have at least fifty years of peace. There will always be some talk of rivalry in trade, in art, and in everything else amongst different peoples, but I want to see the



Australian people develop into such a position that they will be securely in possession of their own continent and its adjacent Territories. Therefore, I welcome the League of Nations, and I hope that although its operation at first may be imperfect, and it may be found that it will not secure some of the objectives it is designed to secure, it will, nevertheless, contribute a potent influence for good, for progress, and for the welfare of humanity.

There is a very momentous paragraph in the Ministerial statement which, I am sure, other honorable senators have not passed without notice. It is indicative of a remarkable change in our Imperial system. Our Empire, as it at present exists, is very different from any other that has hitherto existed, and we are not going to have in the same sense many more Empires. A well-educated Japanese said to me before the war that he believed that the Japanese Empire and the British Empire would be the two last Empires, and that monarchy, because it was based in those Empires on decent order and proper lines, would probably survive in them long after it had ceased to exist as a governing force in other countries. So true was the prediction of that Japanese gentleman that we know that at the present moment the British Empire and the Japanese Empire are really the only two Empires now in existence. Within the last few years we have seen the Brazilian Empire go; the war has resulted in the downfall of the German Empire and the Empire of Austro-Hungary, and has broken up the Russian Empire. We know that the Chinese Empire a few years ago became a Republic, and that the Turkish Empire exists only in name. At the present moment we are faced with the fact that the British Empire and the Japanese Empire are the only two that remain in existence, and probably they remain in existence because they are the fittest to do so.

Senator FAIRBAIRN.—What about Spain?

Senator BAKHAP.—Spain has ceased to be an Empire. Her orators have long lamented the extinction of the Spanish Empire, and we know that a few islands

in the Atlantic constitute Spain's only colonial dominions at the present time.

I have said that I will not touch upon all the paragraphs of the statement, but there is one to which I may allude. I intend to refer to it in a quite different spirit from that which animated my honorable friend Senator Needham. The statement seems to attribute very great credit to the Minister for Defence for the successful demobilization and transport of Australian troops overseas. Undoubtedly credit naturally attaches to Senator Pearce while he is Minister for Defence of the Commonwealth. Even had he remained in Melbourne, credit for the successful organization would undoubtedly have accrued to him as Ministerial head of an important Department. I say that whatever criticism may be levelled at Senator Pearce, the fact remains that he was Minister for Defence practically for the whole duration of the great struggle which has terminated so successfully for our arms and for the cause of Democracy. I am not going to deny great credit to the honorable senator. His has been a great achievement, and I have no doubt that if he sees fit to desire it, the Imperial authorities will be prepared to make their acknowledgement in some way satisfactory to him and to all patriotic Australians. But I do not think that it is right to attribute the success of the demobilization scheme in a direct sense to Senator Pearce.

Senator McDougall.—The Ministerial statement does not do so. The honorable senator is not mentioned in it.

Senator BAKHAP.—That is so, but we are told that—

The success which is attending this great task amply confirms the steps taken by the Government in placing the work in the hands of a responsible Minister in London.

I assume that that is a reference to Senator Pearce.

Senator MILLER.—The honorable senator is quite right in his interpretation.

Senator BAKHAP.—Who is the responsible Minister referred to if he is not Senator Pearce? Senator McDougall's criticism in regard to the letter fails in regard to the spirit. I say that Senator Pearce, even if he had remained in Melbourne, would properly and naturally have some credit attributed to him as



head of the Defence Department, but to say that the success of the work is largely due to the presence of a responsible Minister in London detracts, to my mind, from the very great credit due to the organizing capacity of Australian military representatives at the Front. It is well known that I thought that Senator Pearce's place to secure successful demobilization was rather at this end than in Europe. I recognise that the stress and strain of his four years of war administration must have been something terrible. We all know the expenditure of nervous force sometimes consequent upon the representation of the people by merely the rank and file in Parliament, and I am quite prepared to believe that the stress of Senator Pearce's four years of office as Minister for Defence must have been very great indeed. He was a successful War Minister, and I for one would have been prepared to accept the responsibility at any time of voting a sum of money to give him a holiday. I do not grudge the few pounds paid for his passage to the Old Country, but I say that his place was here, and not there, and the demobilization was proceeding satisfactorily, and would have continued to do so, if Senator Pearce had remained in Melbourne at the head of the Australian military administration.

Senator O'KEEFE.—The honorable senator would have found several on this side ready to pay for a holiday for Senator Pearce.

Senator BAKHAP.—I am glad to hear that generous indorsement of the view I take of the matter.

Senator BARNES.—Senator Pearce has got his holiday, and you have dodged the responsibility for it.

Senator BAKHAP.—The responsibility here is being borne by the shoulders of the Minister for Repatriation (Senator Millen). For the problems of demobilization are inferior to those of repatriation, and one factor is closely linked with the other. The absence of Senator Pearce has undoubtedly added to the great responsibilities of Senator Millen.

Senator DE LARGIE.—How can the honorable senator argue that? Surely Senator Millen's burden has not been increased because of Senator Pearce's absence?

Senator BAKHAP.—I shall not argue the matter in detail at this stage. I have the greatest respect for Senator Pearce's capacity and, after all, in time of war nothing succeeds like success; he was Australia's War Minister during the four and a half years of strife which have now terminated so gloriously for our arms.

Reverting to my statement that the British Empire is different from all other Empires, and illustrative of that fact, I shall read a brief paragraph from the Ministerial statement which indicates the greatest change that has ever taken place in the history of the outer Dominions of the Empire. It is as follows:—

At the request of the Imperial Government, Executive authority was conferred upon the Australian Ministers to sign the treaty on behalf of the Commonwealth, but the adoption or otherwise will be dependent on the will of Parliament.

In other words, with Imperial consent and assistance, the Commonwealth has, in a diplomatic sense, been elevated to the status of an independent community. There is a lesson in this for all the peoples of our Empire. It has been said by a philosopher that immortality comes to those who are fit for it. Freedom comes to those who are fit for it. The bounds of freedom become ever wider in this Empire of ours. Why has the Mother Country consented to our elevation to an international diplomatic status? It is because we were loyal to the Imperial ideal in the time of Imperial and democratic stress, when peril beset the whole of humanity. There are other people within the Empire who are striving to secure something approximating to the freedom which the Mother Country has given us almost without our asking for it; and they should know that that freedom may be had by being true to the Imperial ideal. There is a lesson for all men who desire to be nationally and racially patriotic, namely, that they should be loyal to the Imperial ideal. One might say, "Seek not to traverse by-paths. Throw in your lot with all the peoples that make up this great Empire, and everything shall be added unto you."

Senator O'KEEFE.—What about a bit of loyalty to Australia?

Senator BAKHAP.—The best way in which one can be loyal to Australia is to



be loyal for the next fifty or one hundred years to the Imperial ideal. In all else than sentiment Australia to-day is completely independent. Her representatives—partly because of their incisiveness and force of character, and partly because of the loyalty and courage of the Australian people—have joined in the counsels of the nations of the world. They have been accorded complete international status. What more could we ask?

I am particularly well pleased with the facts and figures given in the Ministerial statement regarding repatriation. I have thought that the burden imposed on the shoulders of one man was rather too heavy, and that, with all respect for the great ability of the Minister for Repatriation, I felt that he had a tendency to too greatly centralize the administration of the Department. But whatever may be one's opinions in that matter, a very great success has been achieved, considering the magnitude of the task. If Australia's legislators do not expect or promise too much, but will attempt to do things in the spirit of our repatriation legislation and of the Department, on behalf of returned soldiers, then we shall stand pre-eminent in the display of gratitude to those who have fought for us and our ideals. I hope Senator Millen will seriously consider the reduction of the burden now on his shoulders. I have marked with satisfaction the concession of greater powers to the local Repatriation Committees; and, remembering the capacity of the Australian people for self-government, if those committees were to have their powers even further extended I do not think that ill would result.

Senator MILLEN.—There is only one step further, and that is to give them an open cheque book.

Senator BAKHAP.—I do not know that we can altogether do that.

Senator MILLEN.—That is the only step which remains now.

Senator BAKHAP.—We have heard that there will be some devolution of the powers of the Minister to certain Commissioners. I do not think it would be undignified if the Minister were to put that into practice.

Senator MILLEN.—I wish the honorable senator would be more definite. If the

machinery of repatriation can be improved I am anxious to improve it. But to say that the whole business centres in my hands is to overlook that there is a Commission in existence.

Senator BAKHAP.—I know that many complaints are made by a comparatively small percentage of dissatisfied men. I have personal knowledge of the characters of hundreds of returned soldiers. A very large proportion of our men have been generous in their testimony concerning the benefits conferred through the medium of the Repatriation Department. The great trouble, however, is that a small minority are very querulous. A man may be an exceedingly good soldier and yet may not be altogether fitted for civilian life. Many men who were, perhaps, unemployable before the war, probably made excellent soldiers; but those same fellows, upon returning, are likely to retain their pre-war characteristics. I do not know that very much can be done for them. Their natural inclinations are probably too strong to be overcome by even the most beneficent administration. When the Minister refers to the subject of repatriation I trust that he will be clear in explaining his statement that no further devolution of powers upon the local repatriation committees can be granted unless they are to be handed an open cheque book.

Senator MILLEN.—And each committee allowed to be a law unto itself.

Senator BAKHAP.—There are even circumstances in which those committees might well make laws for themselves. In some cases the committees are much more capable of advising with respect to the value of local land—

Senator MILLEN.—The Department does not actually control land settlement.

Senator BAKHAP.—I am aware of that, but I hope the Minister will explain his remark that no further devolution of powers can be granted to the committees except to confer on them unlimited financial authority.

Senator MILLEN.—The new powers granted to them began to operate only recently. The honorable senator is possibly thinking of complaints prior to the granting of those added powers.

Senator BAKHAP.—That may be so. The Minister, no doubt, will fully en-



lighten honorable senators respecting the whole subject.

I desire to refer now to that paragraph of the Ministerial statement which reads—

The influenza epidemic in our midst has caused regrettable loss of life and widespread distress.

Then follows reference to quarantine, and to the health powers still retained by the States. Reference to the scourge cannot be too pointed. It has taken toll already of several thousands of Australia's best citizens; and, in its immediate social effect it is more disruptive even than the death of our gallant soldiers in battle. A young man goes away to the war. Probably he has not many direct dependants. His decease arouses keen mental grief in his relatives, but its social effect is not so great as that of the death from influenza of a young mother who leaves behind her, perhaps, three or four weak and helpless children. Any State, therefore, in order to protect its citizens, is justified in taking advantage of all that nature may have given it in the way of isolation. If the safety of a people is the supreme law, the lives of the people must be synonymous with the safety of the State. It is true that important health powers still reside with the States, although quarantine matters are in the hands of the Commonwealth, and by virtue of this important health power, certain States did certain things, with the best possible intention of protecting the lives of their citizens. The State of Tasmania by no means defied the constitutional rights of this Government, but in pursuance of its health powers, provided for a seven days' quarantine; and it appears that the Commonwealth officers thought this period excessive. It may be that Tasmania's geographical isolation contributed to the happy result that has obtained up to the present, but as nothing succeeds like success in regard to fighting an epidemic as well as in a war, let me say that the Government of Tasmania has successfully combated the influenza epidemic, and up to the present has prevented it from getting into that State. According to the law of averages, if it had got into Tasmania it would have taken toll of the lives of at least 400 or 500 citizens,

and I contend that it is much better for Tasmania, if we can commercialize such an important social question, to save those lives than to save £1,000,000, or to prevent a couple of millions being added to the State debt. The Acting Prime Minister, very much to my disappointment, and instigated I know not how, threatened Tasmania with complete isolation if it did not fall in with the wishes of the Commonwealth Government in regard to the period of quarantine.

Senator LYNCH.—The disease got into the West in spite of precautions.

Senator BAKHAP.—But there is land connexion with the West, and none with Tasmania, which is geographically isolated in this respect from the mainland, and no doubt the State Government took advantage of that fact. By virtue of a power which vests in the Acting Prime Minister only, because of the existence of the War Precautions Act, the State of Tasmania was threatened with complete shipping isolation if the local health regulations were not made to conform with those of the Commonwealth. We were told that shipping, which is under the control of the Shipping Board, would be withdrawn, and Tasmania left as it is at present, in a condition of isolation as regards the outside world, greater than has obtained for the last eighty years. The position to-day is worse than it was in the whaling days. I am one of those who strongly support this Government, who believe it is in the interests of the Commonwealth that this Government should be kept in office. But I say that the Acting Prime Minister must have been suffering from some temporary aberration of intellect, probably due to ill-health and stress of office, when he threatened the Tasmanian Government with the exercise of an authority, invested in him, not to fight a State Government that was successfully combating an epidemic, but for the purposes of war. I have promised to allude to this matter, and while I cordially support the Acting Prime Minister, and think he has done a great deal in the way of useful work since the reins of Government have been in his hands, I certainly deprecate most strongly his action in threatening Tasmania with the



withdrawal of shipping because the Government of that State, in its solicitude for the welfare of its people, did not think it wise to accede to the demands of the health authorities in regard to shortening the period of quarantine.

Senator FAIRBAIRN.—But Tasmania was holding up ships for seven days when a shorter period of quarantine was being observed in other ports.

Senator BAKHAP.—Can it be expected that because Tasmania declined to accept the view of the Commonwealth authorities in regard to this vital matter, its people would view with equanimity a threat that shipping would be withdrawn? Tasmania is isolated and dependent upon shipping, whereas all the other States of the mainland have rail communication through the capital cities.

Senator RUSSELL.—Action was taken because your Government failed to honour its agreement.

Senator BAKHAP.—Of all the Governments of the States I venture to say that the Tasmanian Government is the least hostile in its attitude towards the Commonwealth.

Senator MULCAHY.—I hope the Minister will tell us how the Tasmanian Government failed to honour its agreement.

Senator RUSSELL.—They promised, in common with the other States, to hand over all quarantine matters to the Commonwealth Government, and "broke away" from it.

Senator BAKHAP.—On this subject I feel sure that it would be as well if the Minister read the telegrams from Mr. Lee, the State Premier.

Senator RUSSELL.—I have read the agreement, which is more important.

Senator BAKHAP.—I can only say that Tasmania is the least disposed of all the States to break away from any obligations entered into with the Commonwealth.

Senator RUSSELL.—The Tasmanian Government deliberately failed to honour an agreement into which, in conjunction with the other States, it had entered.

Senator BAKHAP.—That agreement was made when they instituted the first period of quarantine at the beginning of

the outbreak. Only when the Commonwealth authorities sought to diminish that period did the Tasmanian Government, in its wisdom and solicitude for its people, decide to maintain the original period determined by the Commonwealth authorities.

Senator LYNCH.—But we were crying out for shipping in the West, and you were holding it up.

Senator BAKHAP.—As I have already pointed out, there was rail communication with Western Australia. I feel sure that the Tasmanian Government would not, and dare not, in the face of local public opinion, recede from the position they have taken up.

Senator MULCAHY.—That is absolutely correct.

Senator BAKHAP.—I venture to say further that one of the factors in securing such a substantial victory for the National Government of Tasmania at the recent general election was its determined attitude and solicitude for the health of its people.

There is one other matter which is exercising my mind, and to which I will make allusion before I resume my seat. Other subjects are only indicated in the Ministerial statement, and may be dealt with when they are particularized and brought before us in the shape of Bills. In paragraph 11 of the Ministerial statement, the following appears:—

11. Notwithstanding the elaborate legislation and machinery designed by the Commonwealth and the States to prevent or settle industrial disputes, Australia is even at this critical time faced by grave domestic troubles of this character.

No doubt that is very trite, and very true. What are we going to do about it?

The seamen, who obtained increased wages and improved conditions under an award by the Commonwealth Court in January last, have struck, and thrown idle practically the whole of the Inter-State shipping. The Government intervened with the object of averting the disorganization of industry, but the seamen declined the mediation of the Court. The Government has, in order to conserve light and power for essential needs, imposed restrictions on the consumption of fuel.

I am not one of those who, by a tactless observation, would intensify the acuteness of an already acute situation, but I will



say that the Australian people, one of the latest of the world's Democracies, will have to address themselves to an immediate consideration of what constitutes a State, what are its powers, and what should be the attitude of its Government, not only in times of industrial crisis, but on all occasions. I am afraid that a certain flabbiness has got into the minds of the Australian people, and into the minds of many Australian Governments, regarding the conception of a State. I say, without any hesitation, that if a citizen in a Democracy, or even in an Autocracy, wishes to go about his lawful employment, and if the State flabbily refrains from protecting him to the utmost extent of its power, then for that individual the State, to all intents and purposes, has ceased to exist—the community power is no longer available to him. In Australia, unfortunately, the community power has not been available, quite recently, for the protection of men who wish to go about their lawful occasions. Does the State exist for men who wish to do something in the way of lawful employment, to keep the necessary services of the country going? If it fails to afford men this protection, it has no community value, and I say that this Government had better immediately address itself to the question of setting the wheels of industry going, of calling upon all well-disposed forces in this community to bring about a cessation of this industrial unrest. Nothing else is so necessary in the interests of Australia at this juncture. My colleagues, Senator Earle, Senator Mulcahy, Mr. McWilliams, and I came over yesterday in a vessel, which, because of this atmosphere of unrest, brought only a few passengers from Tasmania, after having taken home a number of returning troops. She came over, I was going to say, with her holds empty; but they were not empty. The cargo in that vessel has been carried across the stormy seas of the Straits, and along the coast of Tasmania three or four times. What is the community coming to when such a condition of affairs as that is allowed to continue? We must ask ourselves some serious questions, and expect some stern answers. No Government is worthy of the name which does not at

once grapple with the situation. Let it be settled once and for all. If these people who talk about direct action—who will not observe the dicta of Courts, set up really for their especial benefit—are a minority in the community, does the Government which must, in a Democracy, represent a majority, think it is doing its duty if it sits still and allows the industries of the country to be held up by a minority? They must be the minority, otherwise they would be content with the legislative power which they could control in this Parliament. This is one of the questions that must be asked and answered. Only this morning I was reading in one of the latest magazines a well authenticated article on the condition of Russia. I find there—and surely it is ludicrously ominous—that the names of two of these Russians who are prominent in the so-called government of their country at the present time, are Lunatcharsky and Dementieff. More fitting names there could not be. But even these representatives of the Soviets have had to tell the workmen in Russia that strikes are a form of treason to the nation, and that they will have to be dealt with in a very stern manner. In a Democracy in which properly constituted Courts for the settlement of industrial disputes have been established, the industrialists are guilty of treason against the community if they fail to take advantage of them, and resort to direct action. Direct action will have to be met by direct action, and the Commonwealth and its component parts—which are represented by, in many respects, sovereign Governments—must assert the community power of the State. If the arm of the State is at all times to be paralyzed by the acts of a comparatively small minority of its citizens, what is the use of the State? All this flabbiness will have to be shed, and the Government, instead of waiting to see whether a strike will peter out, will have to take the situation in hand, and appeal to all the forces of the community to set the wheels of industry going, despite the men who are on strike, and who, after all, may prove to be merely so many flies upon the wheel. The working man has no enemy in me.



If I secure an overdraft of a few pounds from the bank I have to pay interest upon it. I have no shares in breweries or in banks. I can get sufficient for my needs without this auxiliary assistance. I am not the slave of any capitalist. I am here in the interests of the whole community, and I say that the rights and privileges of the community must be asserted forthwith.

Senator GRANT.—The honorable senator does not expect the Government to move, does he?

Senator BAKHAP.—I do. I call upon them to marshal the forces of the majority, seize this thing by the throat, and finish it once and for ever. If the seamen have a dispute, the constituted Courts of the country are open to them. To avail themselves of the weapon of the strike is another form of war. We want peace, and not war. When the war between nations has come to an end, shall we not put an end to our own civil wars? If some persons are going to appeal to direct action, let the Government also resort to direct action. There is too much flabbiness exhibited in dealing with these matters. There are hundreds of thousands of men in Australia who are willing to carry on the services of the State if only they are assured of the proper protection by the exercise of the community power. But how can they be assured of that when we have weak-kneed Premiers who hesitate to do the right thing when it comes to the pinch, and whose loud-mouthed professions of their intentions are not translated into action when the crisis comes? I really rose to emphasize the spirit in which I regard this particular paragraph in the Ministerial statement, and I do say that I expect the Government, if they claim to represent a majority of the people of the community, to take such action as shall prove that the power of the majority must prevail.

Senator GRANT (New South Wales) [3.21].—In the Ministerial statement of policy I fail to find any paragraph dealing with the position at Canberra. Some twenty years ago the people of Australia agreed to unite in an indissoluble

Federation, and amongst the other conditions to which they then subscribed was one that the Seat of Government of the Commonwealth should be located in New South Wales, at a spot not less than 100 miles distant from Sydney. Up to the present moment, however, there has been no effort of a persistent character to give effect to that undertaking. Indeed, everything seems to be centred in Melbourne with more determination day by day and week by week. We hear honorable senators continually quoting the Melbourne newspapers, as if those journals represented the whole of the Commonwealth. It is time that this kind of thing came to an end. At Canberra we have an area of country which in many ways cannot be surpassed. We have there a magnificent supply of water, and an up-to-date power house, whose services have not been utilized save in the smallest possible manner—in short, we have everything that is required to enable us to found the Capital of the Commonwealth. But up to the present time the influence of Melbourne has been more than sufficient to prevent the pledge which was given to the people of Australia being duly honoured. We are now told that nothing can be done in this direction because of the aftermath of the war. Previously we were informed that nothing could be done on account of the war. But now we are assured that no steps can be taken to establish the Commonwealth Parliament at Canberra until the entire cost of the war has been liquidated. If that be so, it would be better to forever abandon the idea of establishing the Capital there at all. I regret that it is almost impossible to extract from Ministers their intentions in regard to this matter. The acceptance of a plan for the parliamentary buildings at Canberra has been delayed under one pretext or another for quite a number of years, and so far as I can gather, nothing in this direction is contemplated for a long time to come. Yet, it does appear to me that no very great difficulty need be experienced in removing this Parliament to the Capital site. I find, upon looking through a list which has been prepared that more than a majority of its members are in favour of removing there at the



earliest possible moment. I am further assured by a well-known Sydney architect, whose opinion can doubtless be confirmed by members of his profession in Melbourne, that for the nominal sum of, say, £150,000, all the buildings required to suitably accommodate the two branches of this Parliament and the Governor-General, can be erected within the brief period of nine months. Such a statement should surely receive consideration at the hands of the Government, and if it be found practicable to give effect to this idea, the time is surely long overdue for the transfer of the Seat of Government from Melbourne to Canberra. We have there an area of nearly 1,000 square miles, embracing large tracts of good country which could be made available to returned soldiers practically free of cost. Yet the Government have not yet settled a single returned man there. To my mind they are not dealing fairly with this Parliament by ignoring their obligations to establish the Seat of Government in New South Wales, and in the very near future they will find amongst their own supporters such a volume of indignation concerning their inaction that they will no longer be able to disregard it.

The Minister for Repatriation has placed before us from time to time a very considerable number of documents, in addition to which he has made very many speeches, elaborating the work of his Department. Yet we find that it is most difficult for men who are entitled to consideration at the hands of that Department, to obtain redress of their grievances. I propose to quote one of these cases in order to show that there must be a considerable number of returned soldiers who are not getting a fair deal from the Repatriation Department. Some time ago an officer came to me and complained that he was unable, although he had been back in Australia some six or seven weeks, to secure the amount which was due to him for deferred pay. He was one of those men who was exceedingly anxious to get out of khaki into civilian attire, and to assist once more in the production of wealth. His deferred pay, I believe, amounted to between £60 and £70.

Senator PRATTEN.—Is not that a matter for the Defence Department?

Senator GRANT.—Probably the honorable senator is right; but the operations of the Defence and Repatriation Departments are very closely interwoven. This man was quite unable to obtain from the Department the deferred pay, to the amount of between £60 and £70, to which he was entitled. He was told that the money had been placed to his credit in the Commonwealth Bank. He was informed at the Bank that the money had not been placed to his credit, and finally he asked me to take the matter in hand. Such matters should not have to be dealt with by members of Parliament. The Government Departments concerned should so manage that such a man would be able to get satisfaction at the earliest possible moment. When this man failed to get satisfaction he asked me to take the matter up for him, and I did so. On one occasion, long after office hours, I finally got into communication with the general manager of the Commonwealth Bank. He asked to see the man, and I took him along with me. Most of the employees of the Bank had gone home, and the general manager was running the concern almost on his own. We saw him, and papers were produced showing that this man was entitled to between £60 and £70. After a short period the manager of the Bank agreed to give the man a cheque for £60. He has not yet been able to collect the balance. This man had been away for four years fighting for Australia. Part of the time he was in Egypt, about the Suez Canal, up and down the Holy Land from Dan to Beersheba, and, I think, also somewhere in Mesopotamia. During his absence his good wife lived in a tent. The first thing the returned soldier had to do with his deferred pay when he got it was to pay it away to a local land jobber to secure the right to live on a small block of land in the bush. One would have thought that this man would be entitled to get some money from the Repatriation Department to provide himself with a home; but nothing of the kind. The Department does not make provision for such a case. It would appear that prior to his enlistment he occupied a position as

military instructor to the New Zealand Forces. That occupation was, of course, gone when the armistice was declared, and this man has been trying ever since to secure some financial assistance in order to go into business and build a small home. So far, he has been quite unable to get it. I wish to direct particular attention to a fact which I think represents a very grave reflection upon the general manager and the Governor, if not also upon the constitution, of the Commonwealth Bank. This man informs me that he recently waited upon the Commonwealth Bank authorities and asked them for a loan of £100. That is not a very large sum, and he was able to give fairly good security and the guarantee of a well-known land auctioneer in Sydney. In spite of this, the Commonwealth Bank, which was supposed to do such a great deal for the people of this country, absolutely refused to lend the nominal sum of £100 to this returned soldier. If the Commonwealth Bank is prepared to lend money without limitation to those who desire to gamble in the foodstuffs of the country, and to the exploiters of the country, to enable them to still further exploit the people, and will not lend a nominal sum in such a case as that I have mentioned, I say that—whether it involves a reversion to political influence or not—in my opinion, the Governor and the general manager of the Bank should be informed in unmistakable terms that such a policy as that must cease.

Senator MULCAHY.—They would cease to be bankers then.

Senator GRANT.—If the Commonwealth Bank refuses to lend a returned soldier who served for more than four years at the Front the nominal sum of £100 in order to assist him to get into a business, it is not performing the functions we expected that it would perform. This is a very serious charge to bring against the Commonwealth Bank, and one which demands inquiry.

Senator DE LARGIE.—It would be a fine bank if it were run on the lines suggested by the honorable senator, and would lend money to any one who came along.

Senator GRANT.—There is no reason why it should not lend money to a man who requires assistance to build a home.

Senator MULCAHY.—It would be a benevolent institution.

Senator GRANT.—No; this man was prepared to pay interest, and the repayment of the loan would have been guaranteed by one of the best-known men in Sydney. It appears to me that it is against the policy of the Commonwealth Bank to lend money for such a purpose. I do not for a moment expect it to be a charitable institution, but I do say that a bank that is prepared to lend money to enable exploiters to still further exploit the people would be doing far better service to the country if it lent money to those who are prepared to go into business and to erect homes for themselves.

Senator PRATTEN.—Why did not this man take advantage of the facilities already existing in New South Wales for his purpose?

Senator GRANT.—So far as I know, he tried all round, and failed to secure a loan of even the nominal sum of £100.

Senator PRATTEN.—Facilities for building homes are provided by the Government of New South Wales.

Senator McDougall.—That is only an advertisement.

Senator PRATTEN.—No; it is a very practical scheme.

Senator DE LARGIE.—What about building societies in Sydney?

Senator GRANT.—I want to know why the Commonwealth Bank, if it lends money for the purpose to which I have referred, should not be prepared to lend a small sum to this man? The security would be good enough. The land is there, the home would be there, and the repayment of the loan would be guaranteed by one of the best-known men in Sydney. The fact appears to be that it is against the practice and policy of the Bank to lend money for such a purpose, and, if that be so, the Governor of the Bank and the general manager should be informed that it is not carrying out one of the functions for which the people thought it was established.

Senator PRATTEN.—The honorable senator is arguing on the question of policy.



Senator GRANT.—I say that the Bank should be prepared to give the people of this country a fair deal.

Senator PRATTEN.—This man should take advantage of facilities provided by the State Government.

Senator GRANT.—I do not know the facilities offered by the State Government of New South Wales, but I do say that the Commonwealth Bank would be doing the right thing in lending money to men such as the returned soldier I have referred to. He is the very type of man Senator Bakhap approves of. He is prepared immediately to get into civilian clothes and employ himself in the production of wealth. Surely such men are the men we want. We are told every day through the press, in this Chamber, and elsewhere, that what we most need is more production, and yet the Commonwealth Bank, which belongs to the people, refuses to lend to a man of this type the nominal sum of £100 upon excellent security.

Senator PRATTEN.—Why load the functions of the Commonwealth Bank whilst facilities are provided by the State Government?

Senator GRANT.—Why not extend the functions of the Commonwealth Bank to embrace operations of this kind? This man fought for Australia, and on his return had difficulty in securing his deferred pay. When he did secure it, he had to pay away the whole of it to a land jobber at Cronulla before he could secure a place upon which to begin the production of wealth.

Senator PRATTEN.—What wealth is he producing at Cronulla?

Senator GRANT.—He purposed engaging in what is supposed to be a very profitable undertaking, and one which has not been exploited to any extent in Australia. He proposes to engage in the production of squabs. He is an expert in the business, as is also his wife, and though he wanted but a little assistance in cash from the Commonwealth Bank, it was refused him. I say that he has not been given a fair deal. His case is only typical of the way in which returned soldiers are dealt with.

Another case came under my notice some time ago, in which a returned man with a wife and a family of six was particularly anxious to secure a very small area of land in New South Wales—not one of the fabulously extensive estates we read of. He desired to secure a small area of  $4\frac{1}{2}$  acres. It was certainly in a state of high cultivation, well planted with fruit trees in good bearing. In his opinion, it would provide him and his family with a competent living. The owner of the block asked £800 for it. I am unable to say whether that price was too high, but this returned man was exceedingly anxious to engage immediately in a useful employment. So far as I know, he has failed to secure any land whatever in the whole State of New South Wales. Correspondence to an extraordinary extent has taken place with the Lands Department of New South Wales. Inspectors have been sent to visit the block, but, so far, finality has not been reached. That is not the way in which to assist in increasing the production of the Commonwealth. Here are two men whose cases have come under my notice, who are desirable citizens exceedingly anxious to do something to increase the production of wealth in the Commonwealth, and they are blocked on the very threshold of their endeavour. I say that the Repatriation Department, the Lands Department of New South Wales, the Commonwealth Bank, or some other institution of the kind should be in a position to give financial assistance in such cases. Yet, so far as I know, nothing has been done. It was in December last year, I think, that the Senate almost unanimously agreed to the passage of the War Services Homes Bill. I am not quite sure what amount of money was placed at the disposal of the authorities thereunder. My recollection, however, is that the sum was practically inexhaustible. Despite that, and although an official was put in charge at a salary of £1,500 a year, or about £30 per week, and was provided with State staffs and offices, about seven months have elapsed, and not one building has yet been erected in the Commonwealth under the Act. The fact does not reflect credit on the Government. They

deserve the greatest censure for their failure to put the Statute into operation. If an unlimited supply of money were placed at the disposal of the building trades, and of the architects and contractors in the various Australian cities, there would be innumerable homes erected in much less time than seven months. A very large number of Australians who have been abroad for the past four years are now seeking homes. Probably many of those men were formerly engaged in building, or in the production of building materials. To-day, however, they cannot get homes for themselves. Instances have come under my notice where houses, suitable for the accommodation only of four or five people, have been occupied by twelve persons, and even more. This overcrowding is more accentuated to-day than at any other time in the history of the Commonwealth. I am not going to advocate that our people should be reduced to making their homes in tents. That kind of life may be all very well as a holiday at the beach; but, in view of the enormous shortage of housing accommodation, and realizing, as I do, that there are probably very many tents obtainable from the Defence Department to-day, I would like to see them made available, at nominal cost, at the earliest possible moment, for those who cannot secure homes and are not averse from temporarily residing in tents.

Senator RUSSELL.—We have no tents, or very few, in Australia to-day. But we have given them 5,000 blankets and 5,000 yards of flannel.

Senator GRANT.—I am glad to hear of that. The cost of material for clothing is almost beyond the purchasing capacity of many people. The Government should wake up and ask those officers who have been appointed under the housing scheme when they intend to earn their salaries. If a private employer had secured a man at £1,500 a year, and had provided him with expensive staffs and branch offices throughout the land, can one imagine that he would tolerate such absolute lack of result as exists to-day under the Commonwealth Act? How long is it to continue? One of the main reasons for the high cost of house build-

ing to-day is the extraordinary price of building material. While the Government are professing to be anxious to do so much for returned men, they have done nothing to reduce the cost of building material. According to newspaper reports, it is proposed to build some thirty-five houses on 1 acre in one of the Melbourne suburbs.

Senator McDougall.—They are only intended for working men. What does it matter?

Senator GRANT.—I do not know whether such structures will be in contravention of local building laws, but returned men and their wives and families must secure shelter somewhere; and if the Government are not prepared to use the money which Parliament has placed at their disposal, they had better make way for an authority which will get busy. In New South Wales, some time ago, the State Government announced that they were going to do wonders. They built only a comparatively few houses. Nearly all of the homes in that State have been erected by private enterprise. But the New South Wales Government at least did something. The Federal Government, with all its powers recently granted, and with all its money, will apparently do nothing.

I desire to refer briefly to what seems an unsatisfactory condition of affairs at the General Post Office in Sydney. I admit that the building was erected many years ago, and that it is probably of faulty design in certain respects. The fact remains that to-day there are hundreds of employees absent from duty on account of influenza—a condition of affairs due in large measure to the draughtiness and ill-ventilation of the building wherein they have to work. Among those employees who are seriously inconvenienced are the telegraphists. It has been laid down by Dr. Chisholm, one of the best-known medical men in Sydney, that for these men six hours is a very fair day's work. The telegraphists begin their day, I understand, at 8.30 a.m. and cease at 3 o'clock. On two days in each week, however, they are required to remain until 6 p.m. About forty men are involved, and in view of the extremely trying nature of their work



there is an exceedingly unsatisfactory state of affairs. Many of them are breaking down under the strain. It would be far better to increase the staff. The extra amount of money paid in salary would be more than balanced by the saving in sick pay. Six hours daily are the full limit for any man to work as a telegraphist. In most instances six hours are too many.

Senator MILLEN.—Is the honorable senator referring to the hours of work during the present epidemic, when so many men are away?

Senator GRANT.—I am not. No doubt the situation is much worse now, when the staff is short handed. The telegraphists are asked to work on two days in each week for eight and a half hours. It is too much. Added to the exceptional nature of their duties, they are closely packed together, which makes their task all the more trying. Accommodation is altogether insufficient, and yet it is a matter which could be easily remedied. Possibly the authorities are awaiting the return of men from the war in order to replace them in their former jobs. I do not know that that is so; but, in any case, the position must be relieved.

*Debate interrupted, and adjournment question put, under sessional order.*

Senate adjourned at 4 p.m.

## House of Representatives.

Friday, 27 June, 1919.

Mr. SPEAKER (Hon. W. Elliot Johnson) took the chair at 11 a.m., and read prayers.

### PETITION.

Mr. LYNCH presented a petition from the women of Bowral praying for the removal of the New South Wales quarantine station from North Head, Sydney.

Petition received and read.

### NEW SOUTH WALES QUARANTINE STATION.

Mr. RILEY.—Will the Acting Prime Minister state whether there is any truth in the rumour that the Government has under consideration the advisableness of removing the quarantine station from North Head to Bowral?

## SIGNING OF PEACE.

### PREMATURE ANNOUNCEMENT.

Mr. HIGGS.—I desire to ask the Acting Prime Minister a question relating to the premature announcement of the signing of peace. May I state by way of explanation that in the *Argus* of Wednesday last there appeared large black headings as follows:—"Peace Signed"; "Germany Accepts Terms"; "Official Announcement." Then followed the statement that the Acting Prime Minister (Mr. Watt) had released a message received by him from the Royal Australian Radio Station, Perth, stating that—

The following message has been intercepted from the Mauritius Royal Naval Radio Station:—"To all stations; peace signed."

This news being sent by the Naval Radio officer at Mauritius is official, and immediately upon its receipt in Melbourne Radio Commander F. G. Cresswell despatched a copy to His Excellency the Governor-General and to the Acting Prime Minister. A few minutes after 10 o'clock Mr. Watt released the news for publication.

The honorable gentleman considered the announcement to be so authentic that he issued to the people a message of deep thankfulness. I desire to ask him if he does not think that he should protect the public from misleading messages of the kind, and whether he will take some steps to ascertain who was responsible for the sending of the message?

Mr. WATT.—I have already taken those steps. I have called on the Navy Department to inquire as to the circumstances in which the Radio Station at Perth received the message, and a report from the officer in charge who was responsible for sending the message from the Royal Australian Naval Radio Station, Perth, to Melbourne reached me yesterday. I shall be glad to lay it on the table.

### POISONING OF CANNED FOODS.

Mr. FOWLER.—Has the Minister for Trade and Customs seen the somewhat sensational statement in the press this morning to the effect that German employees in various parts of America are engaged in poisoning canned foods subsequently sent to the British Dominions? In view of the possibility of such an

occurrence, I desire to ask him whether he will cause stringent tests to be made of all such articles, so that the public mind may be set at rest.

Mr. GREENE.—Yes; exhaustive inquiries will be made.

Mr. ANSTEY.—In regard to the important matter mentioned by the honorable member for Perth (Mr. Fowler) I ask the Minister for Trade and Customs whether he will take into consideration the advisableness of appointing Government tasters?

Mr. WATT.—The Opposition will also be represented.

Dr. MALONEY.—Will the Minister for Trade and Customs take action to appoint a scientific committee to watch over all imported foods entering Australia, and will he also cable to America to ascertain if there is any truth in the report referred to?

Mr. GREENE.—As I have already stated, exhaustive inquiries will be made, and the Government will then be able to determine what action should be taken.

Dr. MALONEY.—If it is found that there is any truth in the report as to the poisoning of foodstuffs intended for consumption in the British Dominions, will the Minister for Trade and Customs invite the Cabinet to consider the advisableness of abolishing the importation of all foods into Australia?

Mr. GREENE.—If it be found, upon investigation, that there is reasonable ground for believing that there is any truth in the statement, steps will be taken immediately to prohibit the importation of such goods from the country in which the adulteration has taken place until such time as we are in a position to have the whole matter dealt with.

#### COURT MARTIAL: H.M.A.S. AUSTRALIA.

Mr. FENTON.—As the Acting Minister for the Navy (Mr. Poynton) will be returning from Sydney in a day or two, will the Acting Prime Minister take steps at once to confer with him with a view to securing either a reduction of the sentence passed on the brave men dealt with by the Naval Court Martial on the *Australia*, or their release?

Mr. WATT.—It is unfortunate that the honorable member did not hear the answer I gave yesterday to an exactly similar question. I announced the law on the subject.

Mr. FENTON.—What law?

Mr. WATT.—If the honorable member had heard my answer to the question he would have been better informed. I announced what was the law on the question, and said further that when the Acting Minister for the Navy returned from Sydney I would confer with him about the whole matter.

#### RECEPTION TO ADMIRAL VISCOUNT JELlicoe.

##### PAYMENT OF OFFICERS.

Mr. SPEAKER (Hon. W. Elliot Johnson).—The honorable member for Melbourne (Dr. Maloney) yesterday asked me to inquire as to the preparation of a list of officers of the House who were on duty at the reception given by the Government to Admiral Viscount Jellicoe, in this building. He complained that the list was incomplete, with the result that many officers who were on duty did not receive extra payment. I promised to consult the responsible officers of the House and to advise him as soon as possible of the result. I have now to state that I have made inquiries and learned that no list had at that time been prepared by any officer of the House in relation to the function, but that one has since been supplied from which, so far as this portion of the building is concerned, there is no omission of any person who rendered service on that occasion.

Dr. MALONEY.—Then all the men will be paid?

Mr. SPEAKER.—Yes; all other than staff officers of the House will be paid.

#### INSURANCE OF WORKMEN.

Dr. MALONEY asked the Treasurer, upon notice—

1. Is it a fact that the State Workmen's Insurance Department insure Commonwealth contractors' men for 27s. 6d.?
2. Is it a fact that prior to the State charging such premium the various companies charged 52s. 6d.?



3. Is it a fact that the private companies reduced their premiums to the premiums charged by the State of Victoria, viz., 27s. 6d.?

4. Do such companies charge this rate in the States where there is no Government Workmen's Insurance Department, and, if not, what are the several rates per cent. charged in the several States?

Mr. WATT.—The Victorian State Insurance Commissioner has supplied the following answers:—

1. The insurance rate of premium charged by this Department for carpenters and joiners is 27s. 6d.

2. Yes.

3. Yes.

4. No information is available as to the rates charged by insurance companies in other States.

### WHEAT POOL.

Mr. PALMER asked the Acting Prime Minister, *upon notice*—

Whether the Government will supply a detailed statement covering the present position of the several Wheat Pools, showing—

(a) The amount of money involved in the sales of wheat to the British Government, and the value of the wheat now delivered in respect to same, together with the amount of money advanced by them over and above the value of wheat delivered to date?

(b) What advances, if any, made by the Federal Government to meet progress payments to farmers in respect to each pool, have still to be recouped to them by sales?

Mr. WATT.—The answers to the honorable member's questions are as follow:—

Instructions have already been issued to the State Wheat Offices by the Australian Wheat Board to furnish particulars of quantities and proceeds of sales to 30th June next, in accordance with the principles recently laid down for defining the participation of each Pool in such sales. A statement will be prepared on the receipt of information as to local sales which is recorded by the State Wheat Offices and not by the Australian Wheat Board.

In regard to the particular items (a) and (b), the information is as follows:—

(a) The amount of money involved in sales of wheat to the British Government is £30,333,000 (i.e., 500,000 tons and 3,000,000 tons).

The value of wheat delivered in respect of same is £24,657,000.

The amount advanced over and above value of wheat delivered to date is £5,676,000.

(b) No advances have been made to the Australian Wheat Board by the Commonwealth Government to meet progress payments to farmers.

### CASE OF PAUL FREEMAN.

Mr. ANSTEY asked the Acting Prime Minister, *upon notice*—

With reference to the case of Paul Freeman, will the Acting Prime Minister make a statement as to the offence which Freeman is alleged to be guilty of, the names of the persons who laid the accusation, if any, the names of the persons who tried him, if he had any trial, and if Freeman has not had an opportunity of proving his innocence, will the Minister say why he is now in gaol?

Mr. WATT.—The answer to the honorable member's question is as follows:—

Paul Freeman registered himself as an American alien. The information available to the Defence Department showed that Freeman had been fined for a breach of the War Precautions (Aliens Registration) Regulations, in that he had failed to report within seven days after acquiring a new place of abode; that Freeman was an advocate of Industrial Workers of the World doctrines, and had made a statement to the effect that any one going to the war was lower than a dog. Responsible testimony discloses the fact that Freeman refused to naturalize in Australia, and that, although he asserted that he was an American, evidence pointed to the fact that he was a German. For these and other proper reasons, his deportation was ordered. It is not the practice to disclose the sources through which information is obtained by the Department. Freeman is now in detention pending the result of inquiries from the authorities of the United States of America as to the reasons for refusing him permission to land in that country.

### WOOL CLIP.

Mr. PIGOTT asked the Treasurer, *upon notice*—

1. Whether, in view of the worst drought ever experienced in many parts of the Commonwealth, will he make the 10 per cent. deducted from the 1918 wool clip available at once, so as to give immediate relief to those who are so much in need of it?

2. Will he press the Imperial Government to adjust the division of profits, amounting to 50 per cent. on all wool sold abroad, so as to give the drought-stricken graziers prompt relief?

Mr. WATT.—The Central Wool Committee has supplied the following answers:—

1. Until the actual appraised value of the wool for the whole of the wool season 1918-1919 has been determined, no proportion of the retention money can be paid.

2. Advances from the British Imperial Government do not indicate that the 50 per cent. profits, if any, can be made available for a considerable time. To emphasize the point, the whole of the wool from the 1916-17 season has not yet been disposed of.

## WOMEN IN CONVENTS.

Mr. PALMER asked the Acting Prime Minister, *upon notice*—

Whether the Government will appoint a Royal Commission to inquire—

- (a) As to the number of women alleged to be secluded in convents within the Commonwealth?
- (b) As to the increase in the number of such women in each year from 1900 to 1919, together with the number of institutions in which they are placed?
- (c) Whether all such women voluntarily become inmates of such institutions?
- (d) Whether any of them desire to leave or are detained against their wishes?
- (e) Whether such women, or any of them, are employed for the benefit of such institutions?
- (f) As to what rates of remuneration (if any) are paid for their services and how the rate of pay compares with that of others engaged in performing similar services outside such institutions, and subject to labour conditions?
- (g) As to what extent the conditions of life of such women, the services they perform, and their state of celibacy affect the public policy of the Commonwealth?
- (h) Whether any agents of a foreign power have legal authority under the Constitution to detain against their will any citizens of the Commonwealth?
- (i) Generally as to the conditions of convent life which existed in Italy prior to the suppression of convents by the Government of that kingdom?

Mr. WATT.—No. As all charitable and educational establishments are within the orbit of State constitutional power, the appointment of such a Commission by the Governor-General would not be appropriate. I may add that, in my judgment, the practice adopted by some honorable members of using questions on the notice-paper of Parliament as a hoarding on which to advertise their own political views should be discontinued.

## NORTH-SOUTH RAILWAY.

Mr. PAGE (for Mr. YATES) asked the Acting Prime Minister, *upon notice*—

Whether it is the intention of the Government to honour the agreement with South Australia for the completion of the North-South Overland Railway, and to introduce a Bill for its commencement this session?

Mr. WATT.—The agreement in respect of the railway will be carried out when the financial and other conditions permit. The questions of cost and possible routes to connect the railway in South Australia with the Darwin-Katherine line have been referred for report to the Commonwealth Railways Commissioner. The Government of the State of South Australia will be apprised of the position before any decision is come to.

## FOOD PRICES: WESTERN AUSTRALIA.

Mr. FOWLER asked the Minister for Trade and Customs, *upon notice*—

1. Has the Government received a communication from the Premier of Western Australia asking that the local Prices Commissioner should investigate certain food prices in that State?

2. If so, what action is being taken in the matter?

Mr. GREENE.—The answers to the honorable member's questions are as follow:—

1. Yes.

2. During the war, in view of the abnormal conditions prevailing, the Government felt justified in exercising Executive powers under the War Precautions Act and controlling prices. Now that the war is over, the Government believe that if this power is to be exercised, it should be done subject to parliamentary control, and by the proper constitutional authority. The Premier has, therefore, been informed that the late Prices Commissioner for Western Australia has ceased to hold office, and the suggestion made that the matter is now one for the State Government to deal with.

## COMMONWEALTH DEPARTMENTS, ADELAIDE.

Mr. FENTON (for Mr. YATES) asked the Minister for Home and Territories, *upon notice*—

1. Will he inform the House—(a) The number of Commonwealth Departments in Adelaide; (b) the name, locality, and cost of each in rent for premises?

2. Will he state whether the Government will take into consideration the advisability of securing the site of the Parliament House on North Terrace, and completing the building for the purposes of the Commonwealth Bank and other Government purposes?



Mr. GLYNN.—The answers to the honorable member's questions are as follow:—

1. Full information as to all Commonwealth Departments in Adelaide is not immediately available, but, assuming that the honorable member's question refers to those Departments which occupy leased premises, these are as follow:—

Prime Minister's Department.—Audit Office, Royal Exchange Buildings (part only), King William-street. Rental, £156 per annum.

Prime Minister's and other Departments.—Brookman's Buildings (16 rooms on 4th floor). Rental, £500 per annum, plus £50 for rates.

Treasury Department.—Land and Income Tax Branch, Hindmarsh Buildings (part only). Rental, £1,048 per annum. Old-age, Invalid, and War Pensions, St. Luke's Hall. Rental, £17 per annum.

Home and Territories Department.—Electoral Branch, Selborne Chambers. Rental, £260 per annum. Electoral Branch (storage), Commonwealth Bank. Rental, £52 per annum. Meteorological Branch, West Terrace. Rental, £50 per annum.

Repatriation Department.—Currie Chambers. £260 per annum.

2. Should the necessity, which at present does not seem to exist, arise, the matter will be considered in consultation with the State Government.

## BUTTER PRICES: WESTERN AUSTRALIA.

Mr. THOMSON (for Mr. GREGORY) asked the Minister for Trade and Customs, *upon notice*—

1. Whether it is a fact, as advised from Kalgoorlie, 20th June, that butter may be bought in Melbourne at 17s. 4d. per cwt., but if the butter is to be shipped to Western Australia, 199s. per cwt. at Melbourne has to be paid?

2. If so, what is the reason of the extra charge?

Mr. GREENE.—The answers to the honorable member's questions are as follow:—

1. Yes.

2. The butter which is being sold in Melbourne for local consumption at 17s. 4d. per cwt. is fresh butter, upon which no costs for storage, &c., have been incurred; but, as there is not sufficient of this butter to supply Western Australia, that State is being supplied with stocks from the Winter Pool, which was provided for that purpose. The extra cost represents charges for storage and other expenses incidental to the pooling scheme.

## POST AND TELEGRAPH DEPARTMENT.

### EAST ADELAIDE BRANCH.

Mr. McDONALD (for Mr. YATES) asked the Postmaster-General, *upon notice*—

1. Will he inform the House what is the volume of business transacted at the branch post-office at Rundle-street, East Adelaide, in regard to—(a) telephones; (b) telegrams; (c) general postages?

2. Has the Minister given consideration to the question of the erection of more commodious and adequate premises in that locality?

Mr. WEBSTER.—Inquiries are being made, and replies will be furnished as early as possible.

## DEPORTATION OF ENEMY ALIENS.

Mr. BRENNAN asked the Acting Prime Minister, *upon notice*—

1. Is it a fact that persons, members of the white races, supposed to be of what is termed enemy origin, and who are married to natural-born British subjects, are being deported or about to be deported from Australia?

2. If so, have any such married women declined to accompany their husbands so forcibly deported, and what, if anything, does the Government propose to do for the maintenance of such women and the children of such marriages?

Mr. WATT.—The answers to the honorable member's questions are as follow:—

1. Up till the present, there appears to be no case where an enemy subject domiciled in Australia, married to a natural-born British subject, has been deported.

2. See answer to No. 1.

## POTASH FOR FRUIT-GROWERS.

Mr. MACKAY asked the Minister for Trade and Customs, *upon notice*—

Whether he will state for public information what steps have been taken by the Government to obtain supplies of potash from overseas for the use of the fruit-growers of Australia, and whether there is a possibility of supplying the requirements of the producers in the immediate future at a reasonable price?

Mr. GREENE.—The information desired will be obtained and supplied.

## MELBOURNE GENERAL POST OFFICE.

### ALLEGED PAYMENT TO MR. GRIFFIN.

Mr. BAMFORD asked the Postmaster-General, *upon notice*—

1. Whether there is any truth in the statement which lately appeared in the daily press to the effect that he (the Postmaster-General) paid to Mr. Walter Burley Griffin £1,000 for designing the alterations recently made at the Post Office, Melbourne?

2. Is it correct, as alleged, that Mr. Griffin's design, for which the £1,000 was said to have been paid, was, if not wholly, at any rate in part, a copy of a design prepared for the same alterations by Mr. Murdoch, an architect on the staff of the Commonwealth Public Works Department?

3. Whether the Mr. Murdoch here referred to is identical with the Mr. Murdoch who was engaged in his professional capacity in connexion with Australia House, London?

4. If the press statements here referred to are correct, does the Postmaster-General say that it was because, in his opinion, the Public Works Department was not competent to design and carry out the alteration at the Post Office, that he engaged the services of Mr. Griffin at the said special fee of £1,000?

Mr. WEBSTER.—The answers to the honorable member's questions are as follow:—

1. I should like to see the statement referred to. If it has been made, as stated, it is not correct. I neither engaged nor paid Mr. Griffin. This was done by the Minister for Home Affairs and Minister for Works and Railways, respectively.

2. No.

3. If the honorable member wishes to identify Mr. Murdoch I would refer him to the Minister for Works and Railways.

4. See answer to No. 1.

## FIJI BANANA TRADE.

Mr. MACKAY asked the Acting Prime Minister, *upon notice*—

Whether there is any truth in the statement that a subsidy of £8,000, or of any amount, is being paid by the Commonwealth Government for mail service or trade purposes to any steamship company trading between Australia and Fiji carrying bananas grown by black labour, and thus monopolizing the market against the fruit grown in Australia?

Mr. WATT.—No.

## AUSTRALIAN WHEAT SALES.

Mr. PIGOTT asked the Acting Prime Minister, *upon notice*—

Whether he will inform the House—

1. The average cost per ton during the war of Australian wheat landed in Great Britain?

2. Whether any sales were made conditionally upon Australia sharing in any ultimate profits made by the British Government?

3. How the difference is made up between the Australian f.o.b. price and the English price of Australian wheat?

Mr. WATT.—The answers to the honorable member's questions are as follow:—

1. This cannot be stated. Large f.o.b. sales have been made to the British Wheat Commission whose expenses in removing the wheat to Great Britain are not known.

2. No.

3. Mainly in freight. Comparatively small factors are exchange, insurance, and commission.

## SUPPLY BILL (No. 1) 1919-20.

*In Committee* (Consideration resumed from 26th June, *vide* page 10194):

Schedule.

Mr. TUDOR (Yarra) [11.23].—I move—

That Item No. 1, Division 3, Department of the Treasury, "Salaries, £3,550," be reduced by £1.

I do this as a protest against the refusal of the Government to increase the amount given to old-age and invalid pensioners. On 4th December last year, Senator Gardiner asked—

In view of the increased cost of living during the last few years, will the Government consider the question of increasing the old-age pensions by 2s. 6d. per week?

Senator Millen, on behalf of the Government, replied—

In view of the state of the finances, an increase in the rate of old-age pensions at the present time is not considered justifiable.

Yet, on 16th December, the Ministry introduced a Bill to give Chief Justice Griffith a pension of £5 per day. They were unable to afford any increase to the poor old people, but a pension was granted willingly for the Chief Justice. I have nothing against the individual in that case, but I have against the principle. In 1910, the old-age pension was agreed to by



this Parliament at a maximum rate of 10s. per week, and I believe that at least 95 per cent. of the pensioners are obtaining the maximum amount. Somewhere between June and September, 1915, it was decided by the Government—when, I think, the honorable member for Capricornia (Mr. Higgs) was Treasurer—to increase the maximum to 12s. 6d. per week. What 12s. 6d. would buy in 1915 15s. will not buy to-day. Old-age and invalid pensioners have to purchase the necessaries of life in such small quantities that the increased cost of living falls more heavily upon them than it does upon others. I hope the Ministry will announce that, owing to the increased cost of living, they are prepared to grant that increase to these people. We have a very big item for war pensions.

Mr. WATKINS.—You will not have any war pensions in twelve months from the way they are working them off.

Mr. TUDOR.—I hope the honorable member is wrong. It is not possible for a worker receiving the average wage of £3 a week to make any provision against old age. In the majority of trades and callings, directly they stop their pay stops. At a deputation I introduced to the Acting Prime Minister (Mr. Watt) recently, there were present twenty or thirty secretaries of large organizations, and in 95 per cent. of the trades represented, directly the factory or workshop stops no man is paid a penny. Those of us who come closely in contact with old-age pensioners know the struggle that many of them have made to avoid taking the money. Many of them think they are doing something which they ought not to do in taking it, and will make arrangements to draw the pension in another district than the one in which they live. They feel that, in accepting the pension, they are doing something which demeans them. I say it is theirs as a right, and we should see to it that they obtain an increase, so that they will be put in the same position as in 1910, because 15s. to-day will not buy what 10s. would buy in that year. I am anxious to see the Supply Bill through by 3.30 this afternoon, in accordance with my promise, but I urge the

Government to let the old-age and invalid pensioners, who have a severe struggle to-day, learn that at last they are going to receive fair consideration. If the Government can give one man a pension of £5 a day, they ought to be able to grant to these pensioners an increase of about 4d. per day.

Mr. WATT (Balaclava—Acting Prime Minister and Treasurer) [11.29].—I deprecate the method of argument adopted by the Leader of the Opposition. This question stands by itself, as all main questions can, without the constant endeavour to fix artificial relationships between them and other questions which have been decided by this Parliament. It was not the decision merely of the Government to make provision for the first occupant of the Chief Justiceship of Australia; it was the decision of this Parliament. It is the practice of Parliament, and is provided by the Standing Orders, that an honorable member must not reflect on the decision of Parliament. I propose, therefore, to look at this matter by itself, apart altogether from the vote given by Parliament to Sir Samuel Griffith.

Mr. McDONALD.—He never ought to have got it.

Mr. WATT.—This House and another place passed the Bill, and it is now the law. The honorable member has moved his amendment as a protest against the refusal of the Government to increase the allowance to invalid and old-age pensioners and let us discuss that question by itself. I have sent for the figures to measure up the statement of the Leader of the Opposition as to the relative value of money in 1910 and 1919, but I think that the honorable member will find that the 50 per cent. rise in the pension from 10s. to 15s.—would more than cover what the Statist declares has been the rise since 1910.

Mr. TUDOR.—Mr. Knibbs in his figures does not take into consideration the cost of clothing, which is the biggest item to-day.

Mr. WATT.—All speculative calculations by a statist must be bounded by a certain amount of theory, and although Mr. Knibbs' figures may not include the

whole orbit of payments or disbursements by consumers, he has done a very wise thing in endeavouring to give us, for the first time in Australia, some guidance on matters of this kind. Otherwise we would be in completely chaotic night and be unable to argue about increases or decreases. Apart altogether from the question as to how much is covered by the increase to 12s. 6d. and as to how much the cost of living has increased since that increase was given, I am not qualified to judge offhand, not having had notice of this amendment, but I challenge the procedure adopted by the Leader of the Opposition and say that the granting of temporary Supply is not a proper time for deciding questions of this importance. The honorable member for Capricornia, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Higgs), when bringing forward proposals for temporary Supply, did what I have done on every occasion. Very properly he gave the Committee a certificate that there was nothing new in the Supply Bill and that it contained no increases not authorized by Parliament. I gave the same certificate when I brought forward this Bill, and unless the Committee of Supply can accept the word of the Treasurer in that regard it would be impossible to get temporary Supply. It is absolutely essential that the Committee of Supply should have such a certificate backed by the Treasurer when granting temporary Supply.

The proper time for considering a matter of this kind is on the Budget debate. Honorable members who have had the responsibility of office know how impossible it is to say before the year closes what the financial proposals of the Government will be for the coming year. With the complete concurrence of my party colleagues I informed honorable members, in a statement I made at the beginning of this session, that the Budget would be brought down at the earliest possible moment in August next, and that in the first week of July a full statement of the expenditure of the closing year under the different heads would be furnished. Until the year closes and we are able to get some forecast as to what the revenue, direct or indirect, will be and as

to the necessity for fresh taxation, it is impossible for Ministers to bring down increases in this or any other matter. It is suggested that I should give an indication to the Committee as to whether the Government are favourable to an increase. I am not permitted to do so. Honorable members in office know the duress that stands over a Treasurer more than over any other Minister, because, when the Treasurer gives a certificate for his Government that certain moneys will be provided he has to find them. I am sure that the honorable member for Capricornia, who has submitted Bills of this kind before, must rebel against the procedure adopted by the Leader of the Opposition. He may say that my observations refer to high politics. Perhaps they do, but that is quite proper. On the other hand, the honorable member who has submitted the amendment is indulging in what I may term, without offence, low politics. It is a little endeavour on his part to embarrass members of the Government and their supporters by causing them to vote at an improper time on an issue without an analysis of its merits. But the Democracy of this country, old or young, are educated enough to know how empty are political moves of this kind. They have seen them so often. The procedure adopted seems to be utterly fallacious, if not hypocritical. At the proper time the Government propose to deal with this matter. That proper time will be when the Budget is brought down, and Parliament then can say that there must be a decision on the question. The present is not the proper time for coming to a decision on it, and, therefore, I ask my friends on this side of the chamber, irrespective of what their views may be on the merits of the question, to vote against the amendment.

**Mr. CHARLTON (Hunter)** [11.40].—I am sure the Committee appreciate the position of the Treasurer (Mr. Watt) in dealing with temporary Supply, but there are thousands of old people in Australia who are anxiously looking forward to a declaration from the Government as to the granting of increases in the pension rates. Be-



cause of the large increase in the cost of living they are unable to make ends meet, and many of them are obliged to seek assistance elsewhere, and I see no reason, despite what the Treasurer has said, why the Committee should not indicate to the Government, for their guidance, that we are of opinion that the time has arrived when an increase should be made in the invalid and old-age pension rates. As a matter of fact, there ought to be an expression of opinion on this most important question, so that the Government may be in a position to include it in their programme in the near future. I have promised many aged people that I would do my best to get them an increase, to which I realize they are entitled. This is the only opportunity honorable members have of expressing their views on the matter.

Mr. WARR.—The only opportunity?

Mr. CHARLTON.—I admit that there will be another opportunity in August, but it is a matter of urgency—one that will not permit of delay. We have been in recess for six months, and these old people have been waiting all that time for some indication as to whether they can expect to get some increase. The financial position of the Commonwealth is not so much in question. The nation has assumed the responsibility of looking after the aged and infirm, and whatever the cost of doing so may be, we ought to be able to make a declaration as to whether we are going to take their circumstances into consideration, in view of the increased cost of living, which we are doing nothing to prevent. Since the relaxation of the price-fixing regulations further increases have come about which these aged people cannot meet. Mr. Knibbs deals with the cost of groceries, meat, bread, and that class of thing, but deals very little with the cost of clothing, which has gone up, not only 50 per cent., but even 100 per cent. A tweed suit, which cost £4 5s. or £5 5s. before the war cannot be bought now for less than £10 10s. The poor people are not in a position to meet the increased cost of living, and have to deny themselves many necessities. Consequently, they urge us

to do something. I am surprised that the Government did not take the matter into consideration during the recess, and that the Treasurer has not yet given us an indication of what he intends to do. Surely he cannot contend that the financial exigencies of the Commonwealth will prevent him from doing something for these aged people? The wealthy will have to bear more taxation. Taxes are heavy to-day, but they will have to be considerably heavier if we are to meet the legitimate claims made on this Parliament.

I hope that something will be done in regard to old-age pensions. But what I desire to bring before the Committee is the administration of the Income Tax Department. When the Income Tax Bill was before us, I pointed out that, by tightening up the penalty clauses in regard to the furnishing of returns, we placed a number of poor people in a very difficult position. I was assured by the Minister in charge of the House, who consulted the head of the Department behind the Speaker's chair, that my fears were not well founded; that caution would be exercised before prosecution. I do not know whether my electorate has been singled out because of my raising my voice here, but I know that there we find Mr. Slattery and a staff, with an office, constantly prosecuting, as they have been doing for a considerable period, people who have not furnished returns. I have no desire to shield any man who wilfully refuses to pay his income tax, because the law must be obeyed. This law, however, is a new one, and very many working people did not understand that they had to furnish returns. Under the State Income Tax Act they had an exemption of £250, and very many of them, for instance those who worked on contract, did not know whether they had earned £156. I pointed out that when returns were sent in by the employers they would be carefully checked, and defaulters thus discovered, and what I foreshadowed has happened. The Income Tax Office have taken action against persons who never intended to avoid payment.

Mr. WARR.—Do you mean without any intimation to them beforehand?

Mr. CHARLTON.—I shall come to that point presently. My remarks apply not only to miners, but to small struggling farmers. A school teacher wrote to me the other day saying that all the small farmers in his district were objecting to the action of the Department in prosecuting them when they did not know they were liable. I can assure the Committee that this is a very serious matter in my district. Almost every week a batch of twenty or thirty offenders, and sometimes more, are fined from £2 to £3 and costs, and sometimes even larger amounts, for this offence. If offenders are really guilty of trying to defraud the Department, the penalty is much heavier, and of that I do not complain; but the fine is never less than £2 and costs, and those concerned have to lose a day's work, although I am assured that when communicated with they immediately send in returns. I am informed that the practice of the Department, if a return is not sent in, is to notify the person; but even when that person sends it in, he is prosecuted. However, if a person finds out for himself that he has not sent in a return, and sends in one with a plea of ignorance of his liability, there is no prosecution. The Government should really take into consideration the administration of the Act. As I have said, it is a new law, and we are bringing within its meshes people who are earning small incomes. In addition to the income tax, such people have to pay a penalty interest, and that is very hard in these times. I was promised that no prosecution would take place without notification.

Mr. WATT.—That was not quite the promise. The honorable member's objection was to the employer sending in returns for his employees. The undertaking I gave was that where the information came from the employer on the wages sheet, the employee should be notified before prosecution by the Department to the effect that he ought to send in a return. It was in regard to that class of man that the promise was made.

Mr. CHARLTON.—Then I shall leave the farmers out of consideration, and point out that the miners have brought this question before their delegates' Board. I

wrote to the Hepburn Lodge asking for specific cases, but up to now I have not had a reply. I see from a report of their meeting, however, that my letter was dealt with, and three men declared that when they were notified they sent in returns, in proof of which they said that they had their assessments in their hands before the prosecution.

Mr. WATT.—You may accept my assurance that if evidence can be got of the promise having been broken, I will take steps in the matter.

Mr. CHARLTON.—I am thankful for that assurance, but the administration has caused much irritation. I cannot see why my electorate should be singled out by the establishment of an income tax office there for the purpose of these prosecutions.

Mr. ATKINSON.—There are prosecutions everywhere.

Mr. CHARLTON.—Is there a staff established in the honorable member's district?

Mr. ATKINSON.—I do not know that there is.

Mr. CHARLTON.—That is my point.

Mr. WATT.—As a matter of fact, the Commissioner has no politics in these matters; he acts on his own account according to the law.

Mr. FALKINER.—The honorable member's district must be full of delinquents!

Mr. CHARLTON.—Not wilful delinquents; they did not know they had to send in returns, but did so immediately they were told.

Mr. FALKINER.—It must be the same ignorance which accounts for the honorable member's return.

Mr. CHARLTON.—I venture to say that if the honorable member met my constituents he would recognise in them a very intelligent body of people.

Mr. FALKINER.—Not where taxation is concerned.

Mr. CHARLTON.—The Acting Prime Minister knows my people.

Mr. WATT.—I think the honorable member's own behaviour in this House proves that he has a very intelligent electorate.

Mr. CHARLTON.—We would naturally expect, in connexion with a Depart-



ment of the kind, that careful checking would show exactly who had not sent in returns. I have a letter here on the subject, but, as I have no permission, I shall not mention the name of the writer. It is sent by a gentleman who paid his tax each year, sending the money by registered letter and obtaining a receipt. In that letter it is stated—

The enclosed is a form of notice received by me, and issued almost indiscriminately through this district at the present time by the Taxation Office at Maitland.

The object of the Department is to catch the person, and rightly so, who has not sent in returns, and thereby evaded payment of the tax. But to persons to be receiving such a notice who have furnished their returns and paid their tax, and in some cases forwarded same with the greatest precaution by registered post, as is the case to my knowledge here, is nothing short of downright insult.

The officer at Maitland surely knows who does not furnish returns, and it appears to me that it would require no great effort to evolve some better mode of conducting Commonwealth business.

I simply send the circular on with these comments for your information.

Here is the circular:—

I have to request that you will be so good as to inform me if, and to what office, you have furnished Federal income tax returns in respect of your income for the periods—

1st July, 1914, to 30th June, 1915;

1st July, 1915, to 30th June, 1916;

1st July, 1916, to 30th June, 1917;

1st July, 1917, to 30th June, 1918.

If such returns have not already been lodged by you, it is requested that you will furnish them within seven days of this date, and inform me of the reason why they were not forwarded by the due dates.

The necessary forms are enclosed for your use.

These circulars ought not to be sent to people who have paid, and there must be a screw loose somewhere. Expense of this character ought not to be incurred unless there is absolute necessity.

Mr. ATKINSON.—A person who has paid should take no notice of such a circular.

Mr. CHARLTON.—I venture to say that if the honorable member had paid his tax and received such a notice he would feel irritated.

Mr. ATKINSON.—I got notice of a fine after I had paid my tax.

Mr. CHARLTON.—In a well-conducted Department these things do not happen. There is the staff of clerks to go through the lists, and they ought to know who have paid.

Mr. WATT.—There is nothing to grumble at in that; but what about the prosecution of men who have furnished returns? The honorable member said there were certain people who had regularly furnished returns and who had been fined.

Mr. CHARLTON.—I said that that was what was stated at the meeting of miners, but the newspaper report is my only authority. However, I am taking steps, and will probably be able to furnish a number of specific cases within a fortnight.

There is another matter to which I desire to direct the Treasurer's attention. I have received a letter from a Maitland accountant in reference to an aged unmarried man, who would be entitled to the old-age pension, but is of an independent character, and endeavours to earn a crust with a couple of horses and a cart. He did not consider he had a taxable income, and therefore did not send in a return. The accountant certifies that this man paid 8s. per month, or £4 16s. a year, for shoeing his horses; £1 a week, or £52 a year, for forage; £7 10s. for repairs to his cart; £5 5s. for a new axle; and £4 10s. for harness. This shows a total expenditure of £74 in the year necessary to the earning of the income. The income derived is £99 15s. for profit on coal, which he obtains from the mines; £11 7s. 6d. for cartage of coal; and £20 for killing prickly pear—he evidently having been employed by some farmer. This makes a total income of £131 12s. 6d.; and if we deduct the expenses of £74, we have a net income of £57. This man, however, was compelled to pay £4 in two years as income tax, and fined 10 per cent.

Mr. ATKINSON.—He ought to have his money returned.

Mr. CHARLTON.—I am informed that the money cannot be refunded.

Mr. WATT.—The Court evidently heard the figures, and gave its decision.

Mr. CHARLTON.—This case was not before the Court, but before the Commissioner. I brought the matter under the notice of the Commissioner in Melbourne, who forwarded my representations to Sydney, and pointed out to me that it was impossible to make any alteration, as these deductions were not allowed.

Mr. WATT.—That is a mistake, not in the administration, but in the law.

Mr. CHARLTON.—And I mention it in order that an early opportunity may be taken to amend the law. There is nobody to blame but ourselves here; we allow measures to go through in this defective state, and men are compelled to comply with them. I find no fault with the Commissioner, but merely desire that some amendment of the law shall be made.

Mr. FALKNER.—Under the law, working expenses may be deducted.

Mr. CHARLTON.—I am informed that, under the law, there is no provision for the deduction of such expenses. I feel sure that the Treasurer, as the head of the Department, will have some inquiry made. When I wrote recently on the matter, the honorable gentleman asked me to supply specific cases; and, although I have not any at present, I shall obtain some and submit them.

Mr. FOWLER (Perth) [11.57].—It is, of course, impossible for the Government to indicate on a Supply Bill its complete financial policy, or to enter into those details which are proper when the Budget is before us. I am, therefore, quite in agreement with the position taken up by the Treasurer (Mr. Watt) in this regard. The honorable gentleman, however, created an impression in making his reply which I trust he did not intend. There is no doubt that the financial position of the Government is a somewhat serious one; indeed, the position of the country in regard to our national finances is of very grave moment to all of us. Notwithstanding that, I trust that the attitude of the Government towards this question of increasing the pensions of the aged and infirm is one of entire sympathy, and that when the Budget comes before the Treasurer for consideration in detail, he will see the necessity and advisability of making some addition to the present

small allowance. It is beyond question that there is a considerable rise in the cost of living all round; and the wife of the Treasurer would, I am sure, agree with my wife that it represents at least 50 per cent. If that be so, then the position of these people who are drawing pensions should command our fullest sympathy. I do not like the impression conveyed by the Treasurer that the matter of increasing those pensions will be determined entirely by the general financial position of the Commonwealth. There are many ways in which economy could be achieved. I am sure that if the numerous leakages from the Treasury chest, now going on, were stopped, an addition could be made to our old-age pensions without any sacrifice on the part of the country as a whole. I trust, therefore, that when this question comes up at the proper time for consideration, the Treasurer will give earnest and sympathetic regard to the demand that is being made on behalf of our aged and infirm people for some improvement in their present hard conditions.

Mr. WATKINS (Newcastle) [12.2].—In regard to the question raised by the honorable member for Hunter (Mr. Charlton), I understand that the officer who has been appointed to deal with taxation matters in his electorate is to cover the whole mining field. I visited only recently one of these mining centres, and had placed in my hand seven or eight different sets of papers that had been distributed amongst the men, requiring them to appear in Court to answer a complaint that they had failed to send in income tax returns for 1915-16. These men had receipts showing that they had paid the amount of taxation due by them in respect of that period, and had filled in the necessary return when called upon to do so. I at once got into communication with the Deputy Commissioner for Taxation as well as with the officer mentioned by the honorable member for Hunter, but was informed that the summonses could not be withdrawn. I was told that the proceedings must go on, so that these men had either to be represented in Court by counsel or to appear in person to show why they had not filled in a return for the year 1915-16. Doubtless the Treasurer (Mr. Watt) is aware



that these miners are virtually contractors, since they are on piece-work. Very few of them bother to keep a record of their earnings in respect of any one year. This is particularly so in regard to the men working on the narrow seams. Their wages have not been large, and many of them, from my own personal knowledge, were reasonably entitled to believe that in respect of 1915-16 they had not earned £156. I have had handed to me a return showing that in the case of one of these men he was entitled to pay 3s. in respect of income tax. This is an indication that the men were not far out when they estimated that their actual earnings did not bring them within the scope of the Act.

Miners on piece-work have to incur certain expenses which might well be allowed as deductions from their earnings. They have, for instance, to pay for their own explosives, lighting, and tools. They have also to pay for repairs to their tools, and in many cases they have to travel by tram from their homes to the mines in which they are employed. Very few, if any, of these items are allowed as deductions. In that respect the position of the miner on piece-work is very different from that of the ordinary business man. As soon as their attention was drawn to the amendment of the law reducing the exemption from income tax, these men filled in the necessary return, and it seems to me to be rather late in the day now to be issuing summonses against them, and fining them £2 and £3 each, for failing to send in a return in respect of the year 1915-16.

The secretary of one of the local unions was anxious to see that all his men furnished their returns in proper order. He interviewed me on the subject, and in order that he might do this I saw the Deputy Commissioner for Taxation, who agreed that the men should be allowed one month's extension of time. I assisted some of the men to fill in their returns, but when they went to pay their tax each and every one of them was fined by the Department for being late in furnishing his return, notwithstanding that they had complied with the law within the extension of time allowed.

MR. WATT.—That means bad recording if they furnished them within the extended period.

MR. WATKINS.—That is so. It seems to me that the men who readily furnished returns, when their attention was called to the amendment of the law, have been unduly punished, whereas others, who have totally ignored the law, have been allowed to go scot-free. This matter should be put right at the earliest possible moment. It is unfair. In one case within my own knowledge—and there are many others of the kind—the father of a large family who had lost a boy at the war, neglected, in his hour of trouble, to send in a return, and was proceeded against. Surely some consideration should be given to a man in such circumstances. I hope the Treasurer will see that those who are quite willing to pay what is due from them shall not be haled before the Police Courts. In some of these cases men who had never appeared before a Court were prosecuted. The whole thing was disgraceful. I do not stand for any man who tries to evade the responsibilities which the law imposes upon him, but I do urge that fair treatment should be meted out to these miners. The Treasurer should instruct his officers not to look more closely into the affairs of these people, whose income just reaches the border-line of taxation, than they look into the business transaction of others who are robbing the whole community by the undue inflation of prices.

I have only to say, in conclusion, that, having regard to the increase in the cost of living, it is time that the Government took action to increase the invalid and old-age pensions.

MR. SAMPSON (Wimmera) [12.12].—We must all sympathize with the increased effort on the part of old-age pensioners to make both ends meet during the period of the war. Although the increase in the cost of living in Australia has probably been very much less than in any of the belligerent countries, there has, nevertheless, been a substantial addition; but I agree with the position taken up by the Treasurer (Mr. Watt) that the question of increasing the invalid and old-age pensions can be considered only when the general question of the finances of the Commonwealth is under review in connexion with the Budget. I am confident

that the Treasurer will then give the fullest attention to the claims of pensioners, and will also carefully scrutinize every branch of the national expenditure. We should, at the same time, consider whether the whole system of maternity allowances, old-age pensions, and bonuses generally should not give place, as far as possible, to an entirely new scheme. I hope that it will be possible for the Government to reconsider, as a previous Administration did, the question of the extent to which the existing system might be placed upon a contributory basis. Such an alteration, of course, could not be completed for many years; but since we are face to face with enormously heavy outgoings, it seems to me that the state of the finances of the country are such as to call for the utmost economy. Instead of appeals to the Government to spend money in a hundred-and-one different directions, the people should be invited to consider how far the success of this great nation is going to be assured by the development of individual self-reliance.

Mr. WATKINS.—The farmer does not do that.

Mr. SAMPSON.—The farmers are developing amongst themselves a system of commercial co-operation under which, in a collective sense, they can recognise their interdependence one upon the other, as well as the development and practice of a spirit of individual self-reliance. Unless we develop this spirit of self-reliance we can never hope to be a great nation. The old-age pension scheme is on the statute-book, and will remain there until it can be replaced by a system which I consider can be made infinitely superior and wider reaching. I refer to the Lloyd George system of contributory insurance, which would provide a much more comprehensive scheme of assistance to many classes of the community than our present systems. It embraces old-age pensions, sickness, unemployment, and maternity, and under it the State contributes a certain proportion, the employers a certain proportion, and employees their proportion. The Lloyd George scheme includes persons receiving £160 per annum or under. The time has arrived, faced as we are with the serious financial problems

of the future, with twenty-one and a half millions of new taxation imposed because of the war, with increasing war pensions which must be provided from revenue, and with the heavier taxation about to be introduced to provide for repatriation, for this Parliament to take into serious consideration the whole question of the expenditure of this country and the taxation of its people. We must devote our attention to some system that will develop a spirit of self-reliance in the community while enabling the Government at the same time to do its duty. An undertaking of that sort can be stated to the House only in connexion with the Budget, and I hope, therefore, that in considering his complete financial proposals the Treasurer will see his way to bring down some comprehensive scheme such as I have mentioned, enabling the wage-earner to contribute during his lifetime an amount probably less than one-third of the whole fund, to insure him the receipt of better pensions in his old age than are at present possible, and to provide in the meantime against unemployment and sickness and for maternity allowances. It is the duty of this Parliament to lead the way in legislation. It has certain obligations to the people, especially to the infirm, the unemployed, and the sick. The problem has never been tackled either by Federal or State Parliaments in the way it should have been tackled. The State Parliaments are doing a great deal in connexion with the health of the community, but not nearly as much as their wide legislative functions would allow them to do. This Parliament, with its extensive powers of taxation, and its duty to the old people of the community, clearly defined in the Constitution, has also failed to do what it could do if it grasped the position in a comprehensive and statesmanlike way. We have a great opportunity in this House of setting an example to the community by bringing in legislation to give the people the chance to provide in times of prosperity and health, with the combined contributions of the State and the employer, against misfortunes such as broken health and unemployment, and for their old age. I hope it will be possible for the Treasurer, in considering the question of the increase



of old-age pensions and the continuance of the maternity allowance, to do the same as Mr. Lloyd George has done in Great Britain, which has proved so far a very great success.

**Mr. WEST.**—You are talking against time.

**Mr. SAMPSON.**—I can quite understand that such a big question is too much for the intelligence of the interjector. I hope this debate on old-age pensions will have the effect of causing the Treasurer to take into consideration a scheme of the kind I have indicated, which alone, in my opinion, will meet the situation in a way that will reflect credit upon this Parliament and gave satisfaction to the people of the Commonwealth.

**Dr. MALONEY** (Melbourne) [12.20].

—I quite indorse the opinion expressed by the honorable member for Wimmera (Mr. Sampson) on the Lloyd George contributory scheme, but the honorable member does not quite understand the difficulties of the position in which the old-age pensioners now find themselves. If the honorable member will come to my office next Monday, and see these old people as I see them week by week, and month by month, he will realize that their stomachs will not wait. They cannot help getting hungry, and, therefore, it is the duty of any man who understands this matter to take every opportunity to plead their case before Parliament, no matter whether it suits the forms of Parliament or not. If the honorable member would like to go where these old people are being paid, I should be only too pleased to take him across to the orderly room, where he will see any number up to 1,000. Perhaps that experience would modify his views as to the necessity of carrying on Parliament according to strict rule, and then he would not be so ready to criticise any one on this side who feels deeply on the subject.

**Mr. SAMPSON.**—There is a proper time for these things.

**Dr. MALONEY.**—There is no proper time for these poor devils to get hungry, but there is a proper time for men like the honorable member and myself, whose bellies are always filled. I could quite

understand the Treasurer (Mr. Watt) saying that this was not the most appropriate time to raise this question, if Parliament was meeting in the ordinary way, and we were not loafing for six or seven months out of the twelve, or if we were back in the years prior to the war; but the honorable gentleman knows as well as I do that all forms of parliamentary procedure are changing. Some of the old members of the British House of Commons, prior to the war, would be thrown into a fit if they saw what was going on at the present moment. Thrones have toppled, and are toppling, and even the remnants of the monarchies are not too sure of their seats. To be an aristocrat in some countries means to run the risk of making acquaintance with a lamp-post. We are fortunate to be so far from the scene of trouble. Whatever the Treasurer says about the amendment being out of accord with parliamentary procedure, I thank my Leader (Mr. Tudor) for bringing up the question. Perhaps I am the only member of this House who has addressed huge meetings on this very subject. The people say to me, "Why don't you call Parliament together? Why don't you jump in at the very first moment?" At these meetings names are applied to a man whom I revered before he accepted a pension that the people of this country have to pay, but that they had no voice in fixing, which, if repeated here, would be not only unparliamentary but would shock even the hardened ears of politicians.

I have here samples which show a difference of 700 per cent. between prices. This dainty pair of women's boots, made by Keith, a well-known American firm, was sold in Melbourne for £4 10s. This other pair by the same maker was sold in Melbourne for 10s. 11d. Personally, as a Protectionist, I would prevent a single boot coming into the country. Let people who do not think that the boots made here are good enough for them, go to the other countries they love so much. The difference in price between those two pairs is 700 per cent. If there is no profiteering going on, God may know it, but I don't. I have here also two pairs

of men's gloves, one sold for 2s. 6d. and the other for 6s. 6d., or a difference of 180 per cent. Most honorable members, I think, would choose the cheaper pair. I cannot say where they were made, but there does not appear to be much difference in the quality, and no one can say that the difference in the price is accounted for by the increased cost of labour. I have addressed more meetings on the old-age pensions question than, I believe, any other member of the House, and every meeting that I have spoken at has indorsed my belief that it is the wish of the citizens of Australia to give the pension as a right, both to the aged and invalids who are unable to earn a living. The stigma and infamy of charity, however, has been branded on it to such an extent that I advise every one who reaches the age of sixty-five to apply for the pension as a principle. If he does not need the money he can pass it on to some one who does need it.

Mr. SAMPSON.—The Lloyd George scheme would get over all that.

Dr. MALONEY.—I indorse what the honorable member said on that subject, but while that is coming we must do something. I have here a letter written by myself to the Treasurer, which I have put before no less than five meetings. While it may cause honorable members to smile, there is in it a little lesson that I want to impress on them. I do not want the old-age pension, but I demand it as a right, so that I can pass it on if I do not need it. No one can suggest that a wealthy man would benefit by drawing the pension, because he pays a thousand times as much in taxation. This is my application for my old-age pension:—

14/4/19.

The Hon. W. A. Watt,  
Treasurer and Acting Prime Minister,  
Melbourne.

Dear Mr. Watt,

As I have reached 65 years, I now formally apply for an old-age pension, for the following reasons:—

1. I am sure it is the desire of the electors that no slur or stigma should be attached to their fellow citizens who receive the old-age pension.

2. That it is no advantage to persons who are rich, because the great taxation already im-

posed, and the still greater taxation that must be imposed, upon wealth would return to the Government far more than such rich persons would receive.

For example, last year I paid some £10 Federal Income tax, this year I will pay some £30.

3. That all persons of the stated age should be eligible to receive the old-age pension, and it should be permitted for recipients to transfer such old-age pension to any charitable object they desire. If I obtain one I shall transfer it to one who will be happier for the help.

4. That it is an infamy to pay an old-age pension such as the £1,750 now payable to Chief Justice Griffith, which old-age pension the electors of Australia would annul if they had the power of the Initiative, the Referendum, and Recall.

In conclusion, may I request earnestly that you will amend the Old-age Pensions Act on the lines indicated above?

I accuse no one opposite of not having full sympathy for these old-age pensioners, but no honorable member is entitled to criticise the Leader of the Opposition because he availed himself of the first opportunity of bringing forward the claims of these people. Just as the stone thrown into a pond causes ripples on its surface which go right away to the edge of the pool, and just as the tidal wave which passes Port Phillip Heads will reach British waters something under forty-eight hours afterwards, so have the reverberations of that volcanic horror we call the War, and the struggles of Central Europe, changed all forms of human life throughout the world. Therefore, I am ready at any moment, backed up by many meetings which have supported my efforts, to do my best to remedy what I deem a disgrace, not upon the Ministry—except to this extent, that they did not call Parliament together—but upon Parliament itself, in that we ask human beings to try to live on 12s. 6d. per week. When I was young, I lived in London on 10s. per week, but then the purchasing power of money was certainly much greater than it is in Australia to-day. Even with that, it was a very hard experience, through which I would not ask any one else to go.

The average man in this community should be able to get a suit of clothes, all wool, for £2. All-wool double-width cloth made by the Commonwealth Woollen Cloth Factory has been supplied at 4s. 6d.



per yard to the various contractors who have been asked to make suits for returned soldiers.

Mr. FLEMING.—They will not wear them.

Dr. MALONEY.—The honorable member cannot deny my statement that the cloth is supplied at 4s. 6d. There is no sweating in the manufacture of the material and in supplying it at that figure. The contract price for making up that cloth into suits is £1 8s. 4d., for which the contractor provides a coat, vest, and pants. For the difference between £1 8s. 4d. and £1 10s., he supplies a hat or cap made of the same material. I am assured that a small profit is obtained.

Mr. WEBSTER.—My information is that the work is done at a loss.

Dr. MALONEY.—If the honorable gentleman had accompanied the party I was with, he would have learned the reverse. My point is that if these contractors can make a suit of clothes out of this material for £1 10s., the warehouses could be supplied with the cloth at 4s. 6d. per yard, plus 10 per cent; the tailors at the same price, plus 15 per cent.; and ordinary people at the same price, plus 20 per cent. This would be sufficient profit to the Government. The returned soldiers in Great Britain are treated far better than are the unfortunate men weaving cloth in Australia. I have with me a sample of "Blighty" tweed, made in Aberdeen by returned soldiers; and I am wearing a suit of clothes made from material woven by returned soldiers in Melbourne. I have worn this suit for years, and, although the lining was of the very best material, the edges are quite worn out, while the cloth itself is not worn out. It cost me 15s. per yard, double width, and was sold to any person at that price until the Repatriation Department stepped in. In England and Scotland, returned soldiers earn from £4 10s. to £5 10s. in making this "Blighty" tweed, which can be landed in Australia at 10s. 11d. per yard, plus freightage and other charges. It is only three-quarter width, and sells here at a little under 18s. per yard, whereas the cloth manufactured

here, which is double width, could be sold at 10s. per yard and still enable the weavers to earn as good wages as are earned by men in Aberdeen. However, they are not allowed to do so. It would cost £25 to install a machine to make one singlet, but twenty singlets could be made for £18 once the machine was working. I am informed by an exceedingly clever man in the Working Men's College that in a week a man can learn to throw a shuttle. The returned soldier who weaved the cloth of which my suit is made knew nothing about the business three months previously. Thousands of men could be employed in hand weaving, but, owing to the lack of interest on the part of the Repatriation Department, only four or five men are working at the industry in Melbourne to-day. My tailor has offered to buy £2,000 worth of this hand-woven tweed, even if it is sold to him at a profit of 33½ per cent. This material is produced for 7s. 6d. per yard, and it can be sold to the community at 10s. per yard, thus securing a profit of 33½ per cent. to the returned soldiers who are making it and at the same time helping to build up a huge industry. Messrs. Buckley and Nunn are reported to have offered to take the whole of the output of the hand-weaving establishment for five years at 15s. per yard. That would be a profit of 100 per cent. I suggest a profit of 33½ per cent. Let the rolls be sold to the warehousemen at 10s. per yard and the tailors at 10s. 6d. a yard. The material could be made up in lengths of eight yards for women and seven yards for men, and the public could be given the opportunity of helping returned soldiers by buying their output. That is all I am pleading for. I have no personal feeling against the Minister for Repatriation (Senator Millen), although I could wish that his education had been such as to make him a Protectionist instead of a Free Trader. I have no quarrel with him on that score provided he is a conscientious Free Trader who believes in having everything brought into the country. The citizens of Great Britain can buy the material made by returned soldiers; why cannot the citizens of Australia be given the same opportunity?

Mr. FLEMING.—I would rather have the material made in Aberdeen than the material of which the honorable member's suit is made.

Dr. MALONEY. — The honorable member does not know what he is talking about. I would willingly wager him a sovereign as to the quality of the cloth made here.

Mr. FLEMING.—I am willing to wager a sovereign as to the quality of the wool in the different cloths.

Dr. MALONEY.—The cloth made here is much cheaper and is the better article.

Mr. FLEMING.—It may be cheaper, but it is not the better article.

Dr. MALONEY.—I can bring one of the biggest buyers here and he will tell the honorable member that he does not know what he is talking about. This material is just like the Arran Island tweeds made on the old spinning wheels, with the exception that it has not the smell of the reek of peat which distinguishes those tweeds. What I am stating now pertains to suits supplied to soldiers on their return, and, if I understand the interjection of the honorable member for Robertson (Mr. Fleming), he does not consider them worth the money.

Mr. FLEMING.—Very few soldiers will wear them.

Dr. MALONEY. — The following figures will show the prices if my suggestion be carried out. At 4s. 6d., plus 10 per cent., the cost would be 4s. 11 2-5d. per yard; plus 15 per cent. 5s. 3 1-10d.; and plus 20 per cent. 5s. 4 4-5d. I desire our soldiers to earn quite as much as is earned by their Scottish confrères, namely, £4 10s. to £5 10s. per week, providing they are paid for the cloth as it leaves the loom. It should not be shrunk, as was done by one red-tape officer, to save the difference between the cloth as shrunk and as it leaves the loom. The usual method is to pay for the yard as it leaves the loom, and not as it leaves the shrinking place. Messrs. Foy and Gibson, to their honour, are preparing this at 4½d. per yard, and I take this opportunity of thanking that very wealthy company for its great help, without which it would not have been pos-

sible to struggle against the indifference of the Repatriation Department. Councillor Reading, of Fitzroy, and Mr. Rankin, another well-known man in Fitzroy, have offered to take £100 worth and £50 worth respectively of this cloth; and at a price that would give a profit of 100 per cent. Where the reason for the stoppage of this industry is I cannot, for the life of me, see; and I ask the Government to take care that the men get a square deal. I accuse the Commonwealth Woollen Factory of sending out yarn unfit to make up into cloth, and a man at the Factory had the pluck to resist doing it. I know what became of that yarn, and the Department must know, and it was not an honorable way of getting rid of it. If these men are to have a chance to live, the yarn must be of the very best class. If this business is properly managed, I will guarantee to pay a month's salary to any hospital any honorable member will name if, within twelve months, there are not 1,000 men employed at good wages, with the result that the public will be able to obtain splendid suits at £5 5s. for the best quality, and £2 to £2 5s. for the inferior class.

Mr. FINLAYSON (Brisbane) [12.50]. —The Treasurer (Mr. Watt) appears to be particularly perturbed because the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Tudor) has adopted this special method of bringing up the question of old-age pensions. The honorable gentleman seems to overlook the salient fact that this is not by any means the first time the Opposition have attempted to raise the question. Parliament has just had a six-months' recess, during which we hoped the Government would have given some sympathetic consideration to the claims of those people. However, the fact was revealed this morning that the Treasurer is not in a position either to say that the matter is being considered or that it will be considered. It is quite useless for him to lecture the Opposition as to how, when, and where we shall bring forward these matters; we must be allowed the right to choose our own ground. This is the first opportunity, and, I venture to suggest, quite a suitable opportunity, for



us to again urge on the Government the claims of the old-age pensioners. The pension started at 10s., and it took much persistent advocacy before the then Treasurer (Lord Forrest) agreed to increase it to 12s. 6d. Since then we have not failed to continue to press for a further increase. It is futile to quote the scarcity of money as a reason for delaying the matter. It is no good to say to the old-age pensioners that, owing to our enormous debts, and the terrific taxation, the Government are unable to increase the allowance. Not only is there the case to which the Leader of the Opposition referred, namely, that of the pension to the retiring Chief Justice, but there is evidence of this Government being able to find money for other purposes and for other people. Just lately there appeared in the *Commonwealth Gazette* a statement that approval had been given for the payment of an allowance at the rate of £200 per annum to Mr. T. Trumble, Secretary of the Defence Department, to take effect from the 1st July, 1918. The newspaper paragraph from which I get this information also said—

A war allowance at the rate of £200 per annum as from the 1st July, 1918, has been granted to Mr. J. R. Collins, Secretary of the Commonwealth Treasury. Approval has also been given to the payment of war allowances as from 1st July, 1918, at the rates per annum mentioned, to the following members of the Postmaster-General's Department:—Secretary, £150; Deputy Postmaster-General in Sydney, Melbourne, and Brisbane, £100; Deputy Postmaster-General in Adelaide, Perth, and Hobart, £75. An allowance of £100 has been granted to Mr. R. M. Oakley, of the Trade and Customs Department, for services rendered as Acting Comptroller-General of Customs from 29th October, 1917, to 28th April, 1918.

I am not complaining of the payment of these allowances; I am not making any suggestion that these officers do not deserve them; nor am I suggesting that they are unreasonable or unnecessary; but I do say that if the Government can find money to make allowances to the Chief Justice and highly-paid officers of the Departments, they can find money for a little addition to the old-age pension. We on this side are not alone in receiving appeals from old-age pensioners for some consideration, and I shall read

what one old man, whose case is typical, has written in a letter to me:—

Prices have gone up, and are going up something awful, and the pensioners who have no outside help and nothing but the pension will soon die of starvation. Personally, it costs me 11s. per fortnight for my lodging, which includes dinner on Sunday and a cup of tea with small slice of bread and butter in the morning. Sunday dinner is the only meal which I get at all. For the rest, 4 lbs. of broken biscuit, 1½ lbs. of cheese, and a 1-lb. packet of dried sultanas, and 6d. worth of chocolate in sticks is what has to see me through the week besides. It costs me 1s. 6d. a week for my bad leg for ointment and lint. I am also paying off my debt for some clothes, which will be done in about four or five months, if I do not fail myself before then.

In face of facts like these we desire the Treasurer to consider the matter, and all he has to tell us is that we should not introduce the subject to-day, but wait for some other time.

*Sitting suspended from 1 to 2.15 p.m.*

**Mr. RILEY** (South Sydney) [2.15].—I deeply regret the attitude taken up by the Treasurer (Mr. Watt) in regard to the amendment proposed by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Tudor). This is the first opportunity we have had to record our votes in regard to the desirableness of increasing the old-age pensions, and we cannot be blamed if we avail ourselves of it. The amendment will at least show our supporters that we believe that an increase should be made. I thought that the Treasurer would be prepared to say that if the item were passed without a division he would promise, when bringing down the Budget, to make provision for an increase. Had that promise been made I do not think there would have been any desire to press this amendment to a division. Whenever one meets an old-age pensioner, one hears of the disability under which he labours because of the high cost of living. Surely the Government can do something for these people. I tell those who speak to me on the subject that the whole Parliament is likely to approve of an increase, and I believe there is no division of opinion on the subject. These old people are not to blame for the increased cost of living. They are utterly helpless. They

cannot work so as to supplement the allowance, and every penny they spend is taxed. In Sydney even the very coal they use has been increased in price to 2s. per cwt. How can they live on 12s. 6d. a week? It will afford them no satisfaction to learn that nothing can be done before the Budget statement is submitted. They are pinching themselves in the effort to eke out an existence, and the trouble is that the Budget may not be discussed until the end of the year.

This is not a party question. When the last increase was made there was no division of opinion as to its advisableness. I am confident that the Committee as a whole is sympathetic, and the Government should at least be prepared to indicate that they will provide for an increase, not at the end of the session, but at the earliest possible moment. If our old-age pensioners were able to appeal to the Conciliation and Arbitration Court they would certainly obtain it. The pivot on which every case for an increase of wages has turned in the Conciliation and Arbitration Court has been the increase in the cost of living, and in every instance the application has been successful. Our experience teaches us that this request is reasonable, and it should be granted by the Government. The honorable member for Wimmera (Mr. Sampson) had much to say about Mr. Lloyd George's scheme of national insurance. No doubt that is an excellent system, but it will not meet the present situation here. The Government can find money for other purposes. As the honorable member for Brisbane (Mr. Finlayson) has pointed out, the salaries of certain officers of the Public Service have been raised, yet we cannot secure an increase in the old-age pensions.

Mr. FALKNER.—There would be any amount of money for the old-age pensioners if the honorable member's party would tackle the Public Service.

Mr. RILEY.—One thing at a time. Our old-age pensioners need immediate assistance, and the Government might very well introduce a Bill next week providing for an increased allowance. Unless we make a vigorous protest, however, nothing will be done. I shall vote

for the amendment, not as a motion of censure on the Government, but to focus public attention on their failure to announce in their financial statement that they intend to increase the old-age pensions.

Mr. STORY.—The financial statement has not yet been submitted.

Mr. RILEY.—Of what use is it to tell people who are practically starving that all they have to do is to "pull in their belts," as the Budget will be submitted by-and-by, and they will then obtain an increase. Honorable members generally should support this amendment so as to indicate to the Government that in their opinion the old-age pensions should be immediately increased.

Mr. WEST (East Sydney) [2.20].—The influenza epidemic, as honorable members are aware, has been very severe in Sydney for some time, and in carrying out their ordinary duties certain employees of the Commonwealth have been unduly exposed to the risk of infection. Transports and vessels of the Australian Navy entering the port of Sydney with cases of influenza on board have had to be overhauled by Government employees on Cockatoo Island and Garden Island, and after being on board of them for only a couple of days some of these men have fallen victims to the plague and have died. The *Encounter*, after visiting Rabaul and other island ports, returned to Sydney with a number of cases on board. After sixty of her men, who were suffering from influenza, had been taken off, she was brought alongside Garden Island, and within a few hours employees of the various establishments on the island were called upon to board her in order to carry out various works. Several of these men, including a carpenter, lost their lives. Postal officials are also running serious risks. Mail ships entering the port of Sydney with cases of influenza on board are at once sent into quarantine, but postal officials have to board them to obtain prompt delivery of the mails. Some of the mailmen who had to do this work have died from influenza, and their families have also been infected. The carpenter left a family of six children,



the eldest being twelve years of age and the youngest an infant in arms; while another man who, after working on one of the vessels of the Navy for a day or two, took ill and died, left a family of four. I naturally thought that in both cases assistance would be given by the responsible Department. The Postmaster-General (Mr. Webster) is prepared to go as far as the departmental regulations will allow, and is endeavouring to arrange that six months' pay should be given to the widow of one of these mailmen. The Navy Department, however, is not prepared to do anything of the kind. In the reply that I received to my request for assistance for the family of one of these men the Department virtually acknowledged its responsibility for his death, and went so far as to state that "This case is one in which relief should be given by some local charitable society, or perhaps from a fund controlled by the State Government." The Department, while in this way practically acknowledging its liability, is attempting to throw its responsibility upon the State. My contention is that every Commonwealth Department should shoulder its own responsibilities. There have been a number of deaths amongst employees at both Cockatoo Island and Garden Island, and their relatives are certainly entitled to some consideration. This Parliament agreed to a grant to the widow of the late Major-General Bridges, and has provided also for a pension for the Chief Justice. I wish to show no disrespect to the Chief Justice—if he can secure a pension, by all means let him have it—but when I take the public platform to deal with the shortcomings of the Government I shall have to point out that, while a pension could be provided for him, the Government are not prepared to grant a few hundred pounds for the assistance of relatives of public servants who have died as the result of a disease contracted while discharging their ordinary duties. I believe I am voicing the opinion of the great mass of the people when I say that some help should be forthcoming for the mother of six young children, whose husband, while in the employ of the Government, contracted a disease which brought about his death. All my men are insured under the State Insurance Act, and I think that the

conditions of workmen's insurance would cover cases of this kind. I do not think my appeal to the Treasurer (Mr. Wat<sup>h</sup>) should be turned down. The Government must share the responsibility for what is taking place, and no Commonwealth official should be allowed to reply to a claim such as that made on behalf of this woman and her six children, with advice to apply to a State charity. Any man with a family must go where his employment is. If he refused to carry out the will of his official head, he would be accused of being a Bolshevik, or a grasshopper, or labelled with some other opprobrious term.

If I called a public meeting in Sydney, and went on the platform, the Government would find out the real state of public feeling on the question of old-age pensions. I understand fully the position that the Treasurer is in. He has the responsibility of finding the money; but I am confident that the people outside would indorse any action I took to force him to make a little better provision for the necessities of old-age and invalid pensioners. It cannot be denied that persons in high places get phenomenal pensions. When the Chief Justice took the position, he knew, as the other Judges knew, that no pensions were to be provided. The Federal Parliament discussed the matter of pensions before any appointments were made, and laid down the principle that persons in the Commonwealth Public Service should receive salaries which would allow them to make provision for their old age, and that no pensions should be paid. Some of us believed that the Federal salaries should be fixed at a higher rate than the State salaries for similar work, so that Federal public servants could make provision for their declining years. That is a principle of which I approve. I feel that I have not trespassed unduly on the attention of the Committee, because it is no trespass when one has a good case, as I have. I do not know who wrote the letter concerning the woman and her children to whom I have referred, but it was probably one of the officers in the Department, who thought he was expressing the spirit of the Government in office, and

of the party supporting them. If we, on this side, were in power, no officer in any Commonwealth Department would send a letter like that. If he did, and I were the Minister in charge of the Department, I would ask him to look for a position outside, and go to the State charity that he recommended, to see if he would get better treatment there. Very few members present have the knowledge I have regarding the first steps taken in Australia to introduce a system of old-age pensions. Thirty-six or thirty-seven years ago, in the Labour Council of New South Wales, I moved that the Government should give a pension to all old persons. I was laughed at. Even my confreres in the council laughed at the idea, and wanted to know where the money was to come from. I pointed out that even £5,000,000 disbursed from the State Treasury for the use of old persons in need would soon come back into the coffers of the State, and, in the meantime, give a certain amount of employment, particularly in primary production. However, the press of that time took the opposite view, and I was not successful. Honorable members opposite will have to go to the country shortly. How are they going to justify their position when the electors remind them that during the war the Government were able to raise a loan of £80,000,000 in Australia, and yet cannot find £500,000 to increase the old-age and invalid pensions? What will they say if they are reminded that they can always find money to provide big pensions and increased "screws" for officers in the Public Service? I believe in all public officers being properly paid; but how am I to justify that, in view of the refusal of the Government to find money for the most necessitous class of the community, who bore the brunt of the battle in the pioneering days, and the fruits of whose efforts we are reaping to-day? I felt aggrieved this morning to hear one honorable member opposite talking about thrift. No working man to-day, even if he is earning £3 10s. a week, can put anything aside for his old age. One of my daughters told me that the cheapest boots she could get for a child of sixteen months old cost her 7s. 9d., and for a

*Mr. West.*

pair for herself she had to pay 35s. In the face of figures like that, how can people with small wages save money, and what right have honorable members opposite to lecture us on thrift? The Treasurer also lectured us for raising this question at the wrong time. The present is the right time. Parliament has been closed for six or seven months, and honorable members have had no opportunity to ventilate their grievances. It is time there was a better feeling on both sides of the House in the matter of making a concerted effort to deal with the social and post-war problems which we have so sadly neglected.

*Mr. Boyd.*—What is the matter with the feeling on both sides of the House? Is it not very genial?

*Mr. West.*—There should be a unanimous feeling on both sides that the conditions as they exist to-day are not compatible with Australian ideas. I warn honorable members opposite that unless they pay heed to what I have been telling them, they will have very little chance of getting back here at the next election.

*Mr. Yates (Adelaide)* [2.45].—After the eloquent appeal of the honorable member for East Sydney (*Mr. West*) there can be no doubt as to how honorable members opposite will vote on the amendment. We know full well that the recipients of the old-age pension feel the extra cost of living more than any other section of the community. But it does not stop at them. It extends to those who to-day are in revolt against it. They feel it very keenly. The recipients of the old-age pension are mostly the indigent parents of the workers of to-day, and if the cost of living is too high to enable them to live within the amount they receive from the Commonwealth, the balance has to come out of the pockets of the members of the families with whom they are domiciled. The cost of living is a matter that should be debated at great length. There is not an item in the statistical records of which advantage has not been taken of the war situation in order to enhance the wealth of those who were so loud in proclaiming during the war that the sacrifice should be equal. I indorse every remark



made by the honorable member for South Sydney (Mr. Riley), who replied to the claim of the Treasurer (Mr. Watt) that the Supply Bill simply contained amounts required for commitments, and could not be altered. An old adage says that while the grass is growing the steed is starving. Every opportunity should be taken of pointing out that the people are feeling the pinch very keenly, and if the old-age pensions cannot be raised by holding up Supply, at least some little recompense can be given to the aged people by assuring them that honorable members opposite are willing to support the efforts of this side of the Chamber, and force the Government to find the necessary funds somewhere when the Budget is brought down. Old-age pensioners feel they are very unjustly treated when on every occasion a pension is asked for the Chief Justice or some one else who is high-placed it is granted, whereas when an increase to their pensions is asked for they are told that they ought to have put something aside for their old age. If that remark applies to them, how much more should it apply to Sir Samuel Griffith? Could he not have put something aside for his old age out of his £3,500 per annum? The conditions under which stonecutters and miners work are such that dust settles on a man's chest, and his period of usefulness is mostly cut short; bakers who happen to get flour on their lungs have their working lives cut short by phthisis; yet these men during their brief term of toil are asked to live lives of frugality and set aside something for their old age. How much more should a Chief Justice receiving such a princely salary be able to set aside something for his old age? Yet if a pension is asked for the next Justice who retires, this House will pass the Bill as readily as it did on the last occasion. I was absent in France at that time.

An outstanding feature of the statesmanship of to-day is the sharp distinction which is drawn between the classes. Prior to my departure for France I remember the lengthy debates on the war-time profits tax. An honorable member now in Opposition, but then

a member of the Government, made it known that he was willing to take 100 per cent. of war-time profits, and this should have been done; but, while nearly two months were occupied in debating that proposal, which resulted in 25 per cent. being taken, it only took six hours to impose a minimum tax of £1 on every unmarried person. At a later stage I intend to bring forward some authentic information in regard to this bachelor tax. Recently, a young girl in Adelaide, who was in receipt of about £35 per year, was notified by the Taxation Department that she was to be penalized for not submitting a return under the bachelor tax. The Department took into account the keep the girl had in addition to the £35 per year. She appealed to a State Labour legislator, who accompanied her to the Taxation Department, and was able to get them to forgo the penalty for not submitting a return, but she was compelled to pay the £1 tax. If she remains a spinster for the rest of her life, and has to do day work to keep herself, how will she be able to put aside enough to keep her in her old age? Few honorable members have been in factories to see what work the employees are called on to do for the pittance they receive, or know how the workers' families are reared; yet these workers are told to put money aside for a rainy day while they are earning these pittances. The workers are advised in Adelaide to put their money in the Bank of Thrift. Good heavens; there is not enough money left at the end of the week to get one's hair cut unless some necessity has been gone without. Ministerialists will not be doing their duty to the country unless they show that they are in accord with the request made by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Tudor). Shortly after my return from France, the old-age pensioners got to me very quickly. I received a letter from seven of them representing numbers of others who had held a meeting. These men have no families to keep them. They can only turn to strangers if the allowance made to them is not sufficient for their needs. The letter they wrote is very illiterate, showing the class of person who is affected. They are not

of the ninety-nine safe in the fold. They asked me to listen to their appeal, and endeavour, if possible, to get some amelioration of their conditions, because if the old-age pension is not sufficient to provide for their needs, they have no other course but to go into some institution where their liberty is taken away from them. It is not every man's opportunity to go through life and have a competency on which to live when he can no longer earn money.

I have received a letter from a constituent of mine who was leaded at Broken Hill, and, judging from appearances, is in the last stages of miner's phthisis. He is in receipt of an invalid pension of 12s. 6d. per week. He had two sons; one of them has "gone west," that is to say, he has been killed in the great war. The other is about to return from overseas. His wife would have been entitled to the full pound per week as a pension for the loss of her son, but the father has had the pension reduced to 15s. per week. Thus, he draws an old-age pension of 12s. 6d., and a war pension of 10s., making £1 7s. 6d. in all. I went to his house. He had a stretcher, and something that served as a washstand in his bedroom; there was nothing in the two other rooms. The kitchen contained a broken-down table, and a box used as a seat. He had applied to a soldiers' fund for the purpose of getting the money necessary to buy a bedstead and bedding, and fit up a room for the son who is returning from overseas, but he had not been successful in his application; hence his request to myself. I wrote to the head of the fund, and I believe that if he applies again, he will get some assistance. One son he has lost, and the other will return to find the father in a state of abject poverty, necessitating his having to go to some charitable patriotic fund in order to make at least a decent home for the son to come into. This is an illustration of the conditions under which some of our people live. As long as we keep them to the starvation-poverty line, which we are now doing, we are not acting justly to the community, and are not worthy of the positions we hold. I hope the vote on the amendment will indicate the desire of all honorable members to do a fair thing by the indigent section of the community.

*Mr. Yates.*

**Mr. CONSIDINE** (Barrier) [2.59].—If society does not look after its component parts, more especially those who have toiled to build up the wealth of this country, and make it what it is today; and if, at the close of their existence, people are to be turned adrift on a miserable pittance, those persons owe no duty to society. Notwithstanding the argument, which, I understand, to have been put forward by the Treasurer (Mr. Watt), that this amendment, whether negatived or affirmed, will not affect the amount of the pension, the fact remains that the Government have not come forward with any proposal to ameliorate the conditions of this particular class.

**Mr. ATKINSON.**—Cannot we wait until the Budget is before us?

**Mr. CONSIDINE.**—We may wait until the funerals of those people who die from want of nutrition.

**Mr. ATKINSON.**—Do you expect the question of pensions to be dealt with on a motion of this kind at the end of the year?

**Mr. CONSIDINE.**—We expect it to be dealt with at the end of a six months' recess, so that justice may be done to a class which comprises a considerable portion of the population. In Europe and elsewhere the whole social system is rocking, and the people are rising in revolution, giving some indication of what we may expect in this country before long if the Government do not look after the interests of the people. The working men and women of the world, here and elsewhere, are getting tired of the present patchwork system, and are tired of carrying the load. After all, who produces the money for these old age pensions? It is not the gentlemen opposite, or the interests they represent, that bear the load, but the working men and women who produce the wealth, and who, at the close of their lives, are denied a decent livelihood. Honorable members opposite, who will vote against this amendment, do not find the money for the support of these old people, who, like worn-out machinery, are thrown on the industrial scrap heap. We are told that after a long recess this amendment



will not achieve anything, even if it be carried.

Mr. PIGOTT.—What did your party do when in power?

Mr. CONSIDINE.—I am not concerned with what my party did, or did not do, and even if they failed to do everything that I am advocating at the present time, it would not exonerate the Government and their supporters. Such an argument as that conveyed in the interjection may appeal to the honorable member, but it does not appeal to me, or to the working men and women of this country. If one party is as bad as the other, it will only drive those men and women to get rid of both in order to obtain what they desire.

Mr. PIGOTT.—“Direct action”!

Mr. CONSIDINE.—It may be that they will take some sort of direct action, such as the party opposite took when it was a matter of giving a pension to the Chief Justice of Australia, a gentleman who, with a salary of £3,500 a year, advises thrift for the working classes. After Sir Samuel Griffith has occupied his position for about twenty-five years, honorable members opposite tell us that we must look after the poor old gentleman and see that his declining days are gilded with £35 a week to enable him to struggle on, while the men and women who produce the wealth of the country are left to eke out an existence on 12s. 6d. a week. Honorable members opposite may explain, if they can, why there is this difference between the treatment of the Chief Justice and that of our old men and women—why they have done nothing to ameliorate the conditions of our aged poor?

Mr. ATKINSON.—What are the Government asked to do by this amendment?

Mr. CONSIDINE.—Honorable members opposite are asked to express their disapproval of the present Administration in not doing anything—not even giving a promise.

Mr. ATKINSON.—On a Supply Bill?

Mr. TUDOR.—It has been done before on a Supply Bill.

Mr. CONSIDINE.—It is immaterial to me, as I said before, what the party on this side may have done or not done

previously to my coming to this House; the fact remains that the working men and women require something to be done, and if the Government do not do it, the people themselves will before long. We all know that the cost of living has gone up, and yet what is the administration of the Invalid and Old-age Pensions Act? If an endeavour is made to supplement the pension in any way, the miserable amount now allowed is cut down by 6d. or 1s. 6d., and thrift is preached to people who can hardly get an existence. We can manage to keep going, but if we walk down the street we will see some old lady shivering in the cold and endeavouring to get a living by selling matches and boot laces. Such a spectacle is not creditable to us, but, of course, the old woman is not our mother, or our sister, or any member of our family. But while there is one woman in such a position, and anybody is forced to eke out an existence in the cold and slush, while we are living in comparative comfort, there is a possibility of the same fate befalling someone belonging to us. Such a spectacle as I have indicated is an indictment against the system, and I am indicting it as one of the working class. I do not care which party is responsible; my indictment is not against any particular individual or party. I say that society, as constituted to-day, is rotten from the working-class point of view, and it has got to be changed, or the working men and women of this country will change it for us.

Question.—That the item be reduced by £1 (Mr. TUDOR's amendment)—put. The Committee divided.

Ayes	..	..	18
Noes	..	..	28

Majority	..	10
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#### AYES.

Brennan, Frank  
Charlton, M.  
Considine, M. P.  
Corboy, E. W.  
Fenton, J. E.  
Finlayson, W. F.  
Higgs, W. G.  
Maloney, Dr.  
Mathews, J.  
McDonald, C.

McGrath, D. C.  
Riley, E.  
Tudor, F. G.  
Wallace, C.  
West, J. E.  
Yates, G. E.

#### Tellers:

Page, J.  
Watkins, D.

## NOES.

Archibald, W. O.  
 Atkinson, L.  
 Bamford, F. W.  
 Bayley, J. G.  
 Best, Sir Robert  
 Boyd, J. A.  
 Corser, E. B. C.  
 Fleming, W. M.  
 Foster, Richard  
 Glynn, P. McM.  
 Greene, W. M.  
 Groom, L. E.  
 Leckie, J. W.  
 Lister, J. H.  
 Lynch, J.

Mackay, G. H.  
 Maxwell, G. A.  
 Orchard, R. B.  
 Palmer, A. C.  
 Pigott, H. R. M.  
 Sampson, S.  
 Smith, Laird  
 Spence, W. G.  
 Watt, W. A.  
 Webster, W.  
 Wise, G. H.

## Tellers:

Story, W. H.  
 Thomson, John

## PAIRS.

Anstey, F.  
 Blakeley, A.  
 Catts, J. H.  
 Mahony, W. G.  
 Nicholls, S. R.

Sinclair, H.  
 Rodgers, A. S.  
 Poynton, A.  
 Lamond, Hector  
 Livingston, J.

Question so resolved in the negative.  
 Amendment negatived.

**Mr. FENTON** (Maribyrnong) [3.14].

—I should like to know whether the moratorium is still in existence in regard to the homes of soldiers' dependants?

**Mr. GROOM**.—Yes.

**Mr. FENTON**.—We still have the right to protect these people?

**Mr. WATT**.—A Bill is on the notice-paper to continue the Statute.

**Mr. HIGGS** (Capricornia) [3.15].—I move—

That Division 4, "Department of Defence, Military, £222,374," be reduced by £1.

In view of the late hour, I shall make my remarks as brief as possible. I submit the amendment as a protest against the Prussian methods of the Government, as shown in the Defence Department. We were under the impression that our soldiers went away to fight Prussianism.

**Mr. FLEMING**.—Do you know what Prussianism means?

**Mr. HIGGS**.—Yes.

**Mr. FLEMING**.—You have not seen anything of it.

**Mr. HIGGS**.—No; but I have read that when a civilian refused to salute a Prussian officer he had a sword put through him.

**Mr. FLEMING**.—That is only a slight part of it.

**Mr. HIGGS**.—Is the honorable member prepared to defend methods which have been introduced into this country by military men who evidently have been copying Prussian tactics? I do not know whether the action of the Military authorities has been prompted by men in the Government who hope to raise the pro-German cry against the Labour party, or those of us who are objecting to this procedure. They want to call us pro-Germans.

**Mr. TUDOR**.—They have.

**Mr. WATT**.—The honorable member knows in his heart that nothing of the sort suggested has prompted the action.

**Mr. HIGGS**.—Although the honorable gentleman might not do anything of the kind, there are associated with his Government men who would do, and who have done it. They have certainly called us pro-Germans.

**Mr. WATT**.—I was referring to the suggestion that the action had been prompted by the Government with the object of fastening that stigma upon the Official Labour party.

**Mr. HIGGS**.—We shall see what will be the result of our taking up these cases. We are about to take up the cause of the Australian-born children whose fathers are Germans. There are in this country about 40,000 Germans who have not been interned. Thousands of them came to Australia to escape the very Prussianism that our boys went away to fight. Thousands of them are in Queensland. Many of them were invited to go to Queensland in the days when it was difficult to obtain land there. As the honorable member for Wide Bay (Mr. Corser) knows, many of them had to go into the hills and other almost inaccessible places to take up land. They proved to be good citizens. They married Australian girls, and of such unions children have been born.

**Mr. CORSER**.—Many of those Germans have the best land in Queensland.

**Mr. HIGGS**.—And many of them in the olden days had to take up some of the worst land. I have been supplied with a



copy of a circular letter, which reads as follows:—

Commonwealth Military Forces.  
(First Military District Head-quarters)  
Brisbane, 27th May, 1919.

Memo. to Mrs. ———, Boonah, Queensland.

It is possible that your husband will be deported. If so, you and your children will have to accompany him, except under the following conditions:—

1. If you were a British subject before your marriage you have a right to refuse to accompany your husband, and you will be allowed to remain in Australia.

2. All children born in Australia have the right to remain here if they so desire. It will, therefore, be necessary for you to forward to this office immediately your certificate of marriage and the certificates of birth of your children. In the event of your not being able to produce these certificates, it will be necessary for you to supply this office with the date and place of your marriage, and also the full Christian name and date and place of birth of each of your children. Should the children desire to stay here, though their parents are deported, they will have to state their desire in writing. In exceptional cases the wife of an enemy subject may be allowed to remain in Australia even if she were not a British subject before her marriage, in which case it is necessary that she state fully her reasons for not desiring to accompany her husband.

(Signed) J. FILANUS,  
For Captain Intelligence Section, General Staff.

Does the Government approve of this?

Sir ROBERT BEST.—Were these circulars sent out indiscriminately, or only to certain individuals?

Mr. WATT.—Only to certain individuals.

Mr. HIGGS.—This was forwarded to me as a copy of a circular sent to one individual residing at Boonah, Queensland. We wish to know whether the Government have decided upon this course of action. We hope to know whether the supporters of the Government approve of the principle laid down in the circular that native-born Australian children are to be called upon to choose between being deported, or being separated from their parents.

Mr. MAXWELL.—Is it a printed circular?

Mr. HIGGS.—My copy is in manuscript, but it is immaterial whether the original circular is printed or typewritten. Evidently the Acting Prime Minister knows something about it, since

he has said that the circular is issued only to certain persons.

Mr. WATT.—This is the first I have heard of the circular; but the Government policy in relation to Germans in Australia has been laid down, and will be explained to Parliament at the right time.

Mr. HIGGS.—It is monstrous that Australian children should have to choose between being sent out of this country or remaining here unprovided for. Has the Government any funds to provide for those children who choose to remain? The country should be informed of what the Government are doing. But for the accident that a copy of this circular reached me, the fact of its issue might not have come before the public. The honorable member for Robertson (Mr. Fleming) may have seen some dreadful things in France—I understand that acts amounting to crucifixion were committed on the battlefields—but is it to be said that, because of what occurred over there, we should adopt Prussian methods in this country?

Mr. BRENNAN (Batman) [3.23].—The circular that has just been read by the honorable member for Capricornia (Mr. Higgs) is of such a character that it should bring from the Acting Prime Minister (Mr. Watt) an immediate and definite reply. The honorable gentleman has told the Committee that the policy of the Government in regard to German residents in Australia has been laid down, and will be put before the House at the proper time. As one who has not spoken during the present sitting, I rise to say that the matter opened up by this circular should be viewed quite apart from any economic or political question that has been mentioned in the course of this or any other debate in the Parliament. There have been two historic cases in which national outrages of the kind indicated have been perpetrated, and which have lived dishonoured in history. One was the great American case, which Longfellow immortalized in his poem, "Evangeline," and the other is the Prussian case of more recent date. If this circular is to be interpreted as its wording would seem to justify, then some points which rather excuse the Prussian cannot be urged in

extenuation of this case. If this circular means what it says—that military officers may enter the homes of people resident in this country—living under the delusion that they are enjoying the protection of the British flag—and there demand the body of the father of the house, the alternative being that the Australian-born children must go with him out of this country, then the Prussian has the advantage over us.

I do not accept everything that I have heard about the Germans; but accepting as true the statement that they deported women and children from France to work in Germany under conditions that have been described to us, I say that this circular, on the face of it, and without explanation or reply, coming at the end of the war, strikes me as constituting a greater outrage. The circular is signed by a military officer. It is official. It comes from the Defence Department. It tells the Australian mother to whom it is addressed that her husband may possibly be deported. It does not say why, because the military officer does not know. It does not say whether the husband will actually be deported, because the military officer dare not say that, and does not know whether this Government will have the courage to back him up. But it holds the threat over the mother as a cloud of terror for weeks and months, and it holds this shadow of disgrace over the people of Australia for weeks and months pending a declaration of the policy of the Government.

Most honorable members know that I am not a militarist, and do not favour resort to arms as long as that can be avoided. I am one of those who foresaw that, ultimately, this war would end in an upheaval—a great people's revolution—against the spirit of militarism. But while I do not believe, except in the very last resort, in recourse to arms, I, nevertheless, declare that if this policy of the Government is put into effect, if an officer from the Defence Department is to go into an Australian home and take away the father of the house, separating him from his children because of the blood he has inherited, yea, even because of his sympathy with the people from whom he sprang, then that father, if he is worthy

*Mr. Brennan.*

of the name of man at all, ought to be prepared to stand at his own door-step and shoot the despoiler like a dog.

**Mr. WATT** (Balaclava—Acting Prime Minister and Treasurer) [3.27].—I shall not indulge in any reply to the heroics of the honorable member for Batman (Mr. Brennan), for the simple reason that yesterday an arrangement was made between the Government and the Opposition that this Bill would be disposed of by 3.30 p.m. to-day.

**Mr. BRENNAN.**—What do I care about your arrangements in a matter of this kind?

**Mr. WATT.**—I am informing the Committee of the arrangement that was made. There is a perfectly sound answer to the honorable member for Capricornia (Mr. Higgs). The Government for many months—and I make this brief statement for the information of the Committee—have been studying the question of the Germans in Australia. We appointed, first of all, a committee, consisting of the departmental heads who knew most of the circumstances relating to the Germans, and presided over by a member of the Senate, to consider all the British recommendations in relation to Germans in Britain, with the object of ascertaining how far the policy of Britain was suitable of application to the policy of Australia. The Government was thus assisted in its deliberations by references to recommendations relating to enemy property and persons of enemy birth. We have arrived at certain decisions regarding them, but these will not be hastily operated. The report of that committee and the decisions of the Government upon it will be laid before Parliament. If honorable members desire to discuss them, either in general or in detail, opportunity will be afforded them to do so. That is all I can say at present.

**Mr. McGRATH** (Ballarat) [3.30].—I fully expected the Acting Prime Minister (Mr. Watt) to say whether the issue of the circular referred to was a military act or an act authorized by the Government. Surely we have a right to know whether the Ministry take the responsibility for it, or whether it has been done by some military official on his own responsibility. Whatever arrangement has been made be-



tween the parties to close this debate at 3.30 must not be allowed to prevent us from getting information on a question of this sort. I have no sympathy with the atrocities committed by the Germans, but I quite agree with the views expressed by the honorable member for Capricornia (Mr. Higgs). We were told that we set out in this war to kill the military spirit; but when I see a military official daring to put his signature to a circular of that character, I fear that we are creating here something more dangerous than what we have killed in other countries. To me the idea of separating Australian-born children from their mothers and fathers is most repugnant. Up the line there are any number of boys who have fought most gallantly for us in this war, but whose fathers were Germans, although their mothers were Australians. You could find them in every battalion, and lads never gave better service than those lads did. The longer this war has gone on the stronger has grown the military spirit in this country. The military officials here will not trouble to ask the authority of Ministers, or any one else. Give them an inch and they will take a mile. They will invade homes here without question if they get the opportunity. I shall not be silent when the military or the Government issue instructions of that character, nor can I believe that honorable members opposite will be silent.

Mr. CORSER.—Nobody knows what the record of the man was.

Mr. McGRATH.—Whatever his record, I cannot forget that the mother is an Australian, and that the children were born in Australia. I also remember that part of the policy of the supporters of this Government was a wholesale scheme of immigration. They were everlastingly crying to people to come here from Germany. Mr. Hugelthorn, at one time Minister for Lands in Victoria, said only a few years ago that we should flood Australia with Germans. Those are the people who invited the Germans to come here.

Mr. CORSER.—Those men are not going to be deported.

Mr. McGRATH.—You are doing worse than that. You are going to deport the little children, or separate them from their parents. I do not stand up here for any of the things done by the Germans during the war; but I am not going to sanction this country becoming as bad as Germany. When we give people the protection of the British flag, it should mean something, but nothing worse than the policy set out in this circular could be done under the German flag. We should be unworthy of our position as representatives if we did not insist on a proper settlement, before this session is much older, of the question of deportation generally, the question of imprisonment without trial, and the case of the boys in prison on the other side of the world. We ought to make this chamber ring with our opposition to the things that have been done. The Acting Prime Minister has given this afternoon a flippant answer to a most serious question. Surely we are not going to be treated like children. The other side may have the majority now; but a general election is looming near, and I guarantee that the love of freedom that animated and inspired our boys to go abroad still exists. They are still prepared to see that the freedom which they fought for is extended to the people living in this country—not freedom to abuse our hospitality, but freedom to live in accordance with the promises made to them when they came here. We must see that Australian-born children are not separated from their parents, and thrown on a cruel world to starve, hated because of the blood that is running through them, but which they cannot help. In our hearts, we do not blame a German here for being sympathetic towards his country. If I had been in Germany, I would have been sympathetic with Great Britain in the struggle, and it is natural that men should sympathize with their fatherland or motherland. Perhaps, in an unguarded moment, Germans here gave expression to their sympathy; and now we are cruel enough to visit our revenge upon the Australian mother and her little children. I sincerely hope that we shall have from the Acting Prime Minister a

definite declaration that that circular is not only repudiated, but withdrawn, and that we shall insist on children not being separated from their parents.

**Mr. CORBOY** (Swan) [3.37].—I have no desire to break the arrangement regarding the passage of the Bill, but I also feel that important matters have been very flippantly pushed aside. I am disappointed that the Government have not announced a definite intention to review the sentences and refund the fines imposed on Australian soldiers abroad. The honorable member for Robertson (Mr. Fleming) a few minutes ago asked, by interjection, if we knew what Prussianism was. I saw a little of it, and one incident in particular stuck in my mind. A man crimed for a very trivial offence was awaiting punishment. He was ill. We had to make a long march from one part of the line to another. He paraded ill before the doctor. The colonel of the battalion, who was not a doctor, said that the man was malingering. They got a rope and tied him with it behind a limber. They told him to march, and he could not march; and they dragged him for miles behind that horse limber, along cobblestone roads. He was cut and bleeding and half dead. The colonel and the adjutant rode back to him and asked, "Will you march now?" He said, "I cannot march, I am too ill." They said, "We will break your spirit; we will make you." They took him up and lashed him breast high with the rope up against the back of the cart, and dragged him along in that manner. That is Prussianism for you, and it happened in an Australian battalion. It was my own battalion, and my own colonel and adjutant were the guilty officers. What greater Prussianism could there be than that? At the end of the journey, that man was thrown into gaol for a trivial offence.

**Mr. FENTON**.—No wonder some of the officers were shot!

**Mr. CORBOY**.—It is no wonder. There were many instances of men being sentenced to long terms of imprisonment, or fined large sums of money, for offences that a civil magistrate would have dismissed with a caution or a fine of 2s. 6d. Every one who has been in the Army is aware of these cases, and knows

them to be true. We should have had an announcement that the Government intend to appoint a Royal Commission, or some other body, to review the whole of the sentences and fines of any magnitude imposed on Australian soldiers, and to see that the sentences now being served are reviewed, and refunds made in cases where men have been so heavily fined as to suffer financial embarrassment.

**Mr. MAXWELL**.—Would the evidence be available?

**Mr. CORBOY**.—Yes. The colonel who was responsible for the case of Prussianism I mentioned returned to civil life in Western Australia. Another of our officers, who was a man, drove him out of the State, because that guilty officer knew that his life would be taken if he did not get away; but he is still in Australia, and still available for punishment for that horrible crime.

The question of deportations has been raised. I know a German who has been in Australia for thirty-six years and naturalized for thirty. When the war broke out, he had been so long away from his native country that he could not speak German, although he could still read and write it. He was a widower, with a daughter of twenty-one, Australian born, of an Australian mother. That man is being deported very shortly, and his daughter cannot get a permit to accompany him, so that there is to be an enforced separation between those two, who have no others in the world. Right here in Australia, we have Prussianism to deal with, and that Prussianism is being played with by the Defence Department of Australia.

**Question**.—That the item be reduced by £1 (Mr. Higgs' amendment)—put. The Committee divided.

Ayes	..	..	17
Noes	..	..	27

Majority	..	..	10
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AYES.

Brennan, F.	McDonald, C.
Charlton, M.	McGrath, D. C.
Considine, M. P.	Tudor, F. G.
Corboy, E. W.	Wallace, C.
Fenton, J. E.	West, J. E.
Finlayson, W. F.	Yates, G. E.
Higgs, W. G.	<i>Tellers:</i>
Maloney, Dr.	Page, J.
Mathews, J.	Riley, E.



## NOES.

Archibald, W. O.  
Atkinson, L.  
Bamford, F. W.  
Bayley, J. G.  
Best, Sir Robert  
Boyd, J. A.  
Corser, E. B. C.  
Fleming, W. M.  
Foster, Richard  
Glynn, P. McM.  
Greene, W. M.  
Groom, L. E.  
Leckie, J. W.  
Lister, J. H.

Lynch, J.  
Mackay, G. H.  
Maxwell, G. A.  
Orchard, R. B.  
Pigott, H. R. M.  
Sampson, S.  
Smith, Laird  
Spence, W. G.  
Watt, W. A.  
Webster, W.  
Wise, G. H.  
*Tellers:*  
Story, W. H.  
Thomson, John

## PAIRS.

Anstey, F.  
Blakeley, A.  
Catts, J. H.  
Mahony, W. G.  
Nicholls, S. R.  
Watkins, D.

Sinclair, H.  
Rodgers, A. S.  
Poynton, A.  
Lamond, Hector  
Livingston, J.  
McWilliams, W. J.

Question so resolved in the negative.

Amendment negatived.

**Mr. YATES** (Adelaide) [3.50].—It was my desire to speak on military matters, and on the question of internees, but, having regard to the assurance of the Acting Prime Minister (Mr. Watt) that opportunity would be given to discuss these subjects early in the session, and in order to honour the promise given by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Tudor) that the Bill would go from here to the Senate this afternoon, I did not take the opportunity of speaking before the division was taken. I make these remarks now in order to explain my silence.

Schedule agreed to.

Preamble and title agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment; report adopted.

Bill read a third time.

**Mr. WATT** (Balaclava—Acting Prime Minister and Treasurer) [3.52].—*(By leave)*—It is a frequent practice to make arrangements between the Leader of the Opposition and the Government for the disposal of a Bill. In this case, the arrangement was to deliver the goods to the Senate at 3.30 o'clock, and I quite appreciate the fact that the Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues in authority in the party, did their very best to carry out their part of the contract. I have no complaint to make about the excessive time occupied, and the difficulties it created with regard to getting the measure to the Senate.

## PAPERS.

The following papers were presented:—

Air Ministry—Synopsis of British Air Effort during the war. (Paper presented to British Parliament.)  
Public Service Act—Appointment of P. W. Mitchell, Department of Trade and Customs.

## ADJOURNMENT.

**ORDER OF BUSINESS**—POST AND TELEGRAPH DEPARTMENT: DISMISSAL OF EMPLOYEES—RETURNED SOLDIERS AND COMPULSORY MILITARY TRAINING—EXPORTATIONS: CASE OF PAUL FREEMAN.

**Mr. WATT** (Balaclava—Acting Prime Minister and Treasurer) [3.49].—I move—

That the House do now adjourn.

On Wednesday, the first three motions on the business-paper will be advanced to such a stage as will enable Ministers to introduce and explain three measures, and permit of the House debating them at the following sitting. The next business will be the discussion of the Ministerial statement.

**Mr. HIGGS** (Capricornia) [3.50].—I regret to have to inform the Acting Prime Minister and the House that the Postmaster-General (Mr. Webster) declines to come into the chamber to hear my remarks on a matter of urgent importance. A messenger of the House went to him, and asked him to come into the chamber, but he says that he is too busy. No Minister ought to be so conceited or swelled up by his own importance as to decline to come into the chamber.

**Mr. GROOM**.—He may have a special reason.

**Mr. HIGGS**.—He says that he is too busy, but I say that his place is in the chamber. Since he declines to come in, I ask the Acting Prime Minister (Mr. Watt) to be good enough to take action. He takes the view, I believe, that the government of the country remains in Australia, although the Prime Minister (Mr. Hughes) is abroad, and I ask him to intervene and prevent a grave injustice in the Central Post Office, where certain temporary telegraph operators have been told that they must cease work on Monday next, although there is plenty of work for them to do. Through his mistaken views on economy,

exemplified by the instructions he gave to the departmental officers to save pieces of string, and write on the backs of used envelopes, the Postmaster-General is now apparently going in for boy labour, although in olden times, when he was a Labour member, he used to deprecate, and endeavour to prevent that sort of thing. I understand that boys have been taken on in the office, and that many officers have been discharged, although some of them are married men, whose sons have gone to the Front. In some cases the sons have been killed. I am sure that the great majority of the soldiers who went to the Front would not be in favour of the discharge of the fathers of men who enlisted and went abroad, in order even to find places for returned soldiers. I am quite satisfied that if the matter were put to the Returned Soldiers Association, they would agree to allow the fathers of sons who went to the Front to remain in their employment. I hope that the Acting Prime Minister will intervene in this matter, and prevent any injustice being done.

**Mr. TUDOR** (Yarra) [3.52].—I hope that no action will be taken in the matter until replies are given to the letters which have been sent to the Acting Prime Minister dealing with it. Men are affected who have given valuable service to the Postal Department for nearly five years, and who qualified by passing examinations long before the war broke out. Altogether 700 went up for examination, both junior and senior. Usually the list of successful candidates is marked with double the number required, but only thirty-nine received a sufficient number of marks to render them eligible for permanent appointment, and ten out of twenty were permanently appointed. Subsequently Mr. Fisher brought in his minute stating that there were to be no further permanent appointments during the war, so that the men who went up for examination, and afterwards enlisted, would not be at any disadvantage on their return in the matter of promotion. The men affected are those who have carried on the work of the Department for the four years of the war, and saved thousands of pounds more than could the Minister, who will not come in here to listen to complaints. No Minister is

above Parliament, and honorable members are entitled to criticise a Minister's Department in his presence. In this respect, we owe a duty to the people. I may say that, so far as I know, not one who passed the examination is an elector of mine, and I am merely fighting for a principle, and for men who have done good work for the country. They volunteered for enlistment, but were turned down, and they are now told they must leave the Department. Though the Acting Prime Minister and myself may disagree on things political, I know that I can trust him to have a full inquiry, and to deal fairly with these men.

**Mr. WISE** (Gippsland—Assistant Minister for Defence) [4.0].—The other day a statement was made about returned soldiers being required to train in the Military Forces. There must have been some mistake, because no returned soldiers are so required to train.

**Mr. CONSIDINE** (Barrier) [4.2].—I desire to briefly refer to the case of Paul Freeman. I have received a telegram from Mr. Brookfield, member of the Legislative Assembly, New South Wales, informing me that at a mass meeting held in Martin-place, Sydney, on Wednesday night last, the Government was urged to immediately release Freeman on bail, and, further, that substantial bail by prominent citizens is available. I do not wish to go into the details of this case. Honorable members, and the Acting Prime Minister (Mr. Watt) especially, know that public feeling has arisen in connexion with the deportation or various deportations of this man, and that a great number of people believe a grave injustice has been done him. I should have liked to deal with the whole question of deportations, but, owing to domestic trouble, I was not able to be here yesterday, and the arrangement entered into precluded my discussing the matter under the Defence items in the Supply Bill. Will the Acting Prime Minister accede to the request made by the mass meeting of citizens in Sydney, comprising, as that meeting did, 15,000 people? We ask the Government to take steps to give public trial, not only to Freeman, but to all others similarly situated. The Freeman incident is a spec-



tacular one, which has drawn attention more forcibly to the whole question of deportation from Australia than, perhaps, any other case could. But although Freeman has been treated so vilely, he has been particularly fortunate in having public opinion roused on his behalf; other poor devils have been deported without any trouble at all. I am well aware that the Acting Prime Minister's reply to the honorable member for Bourke (Mr. Anstey) yesterday is merely a reiteration of the statement of the Acting Minister for Defence (Senator Russell) in reply to the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Tudor), myself, and others who waited on him as a deputation. We are told that evidence is available that Freeman is German. Well, I worked with Freeman in Broken Hill for years, and, so far as I am any judge, if he is anything he is American, for he speaks with a pronounced American accent. What his origin is I do not know, but I do know that he went to Queensland, and there is grave suspicion that certain mining magnates are interested, or were interested, in getting rid of him. He discovered a good copper "show," and was engaged on it when, after the Armistice, he was shanghaied out of the country. There has been no public inquiry, he has not been placed on trial, and has had no opportunity to cross-examine those who put the law in motion, or to otherwise defend himself. Will the Acting Prime Minister state definitely whether Freeman will be given a trial and allowed out on substantial bail, if necessary, pending investigation of the reason for his deportation?

**Mr. BRENNAN** (Batman) [4.6].—I rise to support what has been said by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Tudor), and the honorable member for Capricornia (Mr. Higgs), relating to postal electricians. I should not have spoken but for the fact that the question has been raised this afternoon.

**Mr. Higgs**.—I have been again informed that temporary telegraph operators are instructed to cease work on Monday.

**Mr. BRENNAN**.—That may be so. I only know it is a matter for the Acting Prime Minister (Mr. Watt), and

it is only fair to say that he was good enough to see me a few days ago, and place at my disposal all the information he has relating to it. In reply, I have prepared a memorandum for his consideration. I hope that the claims of these men will not in any way be prejudiced by the fact that the Postmaster-General (Mr. Webster) has not thought fit to hear a statement of the case this afternoon. This matter was, in the first place, dealt with by Mr. Fisher, as Prime Minister, in 1915, when he gave what I conceive to be a most definite assurance in regard to these men. On the present occasion I will content myself with sincerely hoping that the Acting Prime Minister, regarding this as a matter concerning his own Department, and regarding the pledges given by his predecessors, will faithfully peruse the evidence, and that, before he comes to a decision adverse to the men, he will hear a number of members who are anxious to put the case further to him, if necessary, as a deputation. I believe that the honorable gentleman proposes to give his personal attention and consideration to the weighing of the evidence, and I am satisfied that, if he does so, these men will be reinstated, for some of them have already been removed.

**Mr. FENTON** (Maribyrnong) [4.9].—I should like the Acting Prime Minister (Mr. Watt) and the Postmaster-General (Mr. Webster) to ascertain whether it is true that orders have been given outside Australia for the manufacture of common battery boards, which were previously supplied within this country. If work is to be sent outside, it stands to reason that there will be need for fewer employees in the Department.

If honorable members look at *Hansard* of 1st September, 1915, they will see that Mr. Fisher, the then Prime Minister and Treasurer, in dealing with the amending Public Service Bill, made two solemn promises to the postal electricians—that none would be discharged, and that their case would be dealt with nine months after the conclusion of the war. Speaking legally, the war is not yet ended, and, therefore, under that promise, instead of their services being dispensed with, these men ought to be still employed.



Mr. WATT (Balaclava—Acting Prime Minister, and Treasurer) [4.10].—The case to which the honorable member for Capricornia (Mr. Higgs) referred is, I think, different from that in the minds of the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Tudor) and the honorable member for Batman (Mr. Brennan). I know nothing of telegraph operators being discharged, and I will see that the matter is referred to the Postmaster-General for consideration. I regret to hear that the honorable member for Capricornia thinks that the Postmaster-General would not come into the House simply because this matter was to be mentioned.

Mr. Higgs.—No; but I say it is a gross discourtesy which no Minister has ever before committed.

Mr. WATT.—I can only say that the Postmaster-General, at my request, has occupied a seat at this table when I could not be present during the discussion of Supply, although he much desired to be busy in his Department. The honorable gentleman has done service, penance almost; and I do not think there has been any discourtesy on his part. The brevity of the Postmaster-General's remarks may sometimes upset the composure of honorable gentlemen opposite, but I am sure that if we look him up and down we can discern no discourtesy written on the lineaments of his noble features or his marble brow. The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Tudor) wrote about the case of the postal electricians, and the honorable member for Batman (Mr. Brennan) has dealt with that case, because, I understand, several of those concerned are in his constituency.

Mr. BRENNAN.—Do not say that it is because of that I have spoken.

Mr. WATT.—If that is thought to be a suggestion of an improper motive, I beg to decline the theory, because I think every member is entitled to speak for his constituents; indeed, that is primarily why he is here. At first, this appeared to me to be a departmental matter for the Postmaster-General. The issue was first raised by the honorable member for Batman, and it has involved the history of a number of promises from Prime Ministers, which do seem to pledge the faith of former Administrations.

With the object of ascertaining what the facts were, I asked the Prime Minister's Department to put them in *précis* form, and when this was received I handed it to the honorable member for Batman. Since then I have had no opportunity of conferring with the Postmaster-General in order to ascertain his views, or even time to consider the two or three complications in the matter. All I can say is that I propose to do this at the first opportunity, and see where I think the duty of the Government lies. I am sure that the Postmaster-General does not desire to do an injustice to any member of his staff, but he has a public obligation, as we all have, to run his Department as it should be. I know that he has been confronted with redundant officers in certain branches, and he would not be doing his duty if he kept them on the salary payroll while doing nothing.

Mr. TUDOR.—That is not the position in this case.

Mr. WATT.—I am not saying that it is, but I say that the Postmaster-General has been confronted by unpleasant tasks in two or three cases, and has had to do unpleasant things. Honorable members may rely that the matter will be investigated as soon as opportunity arises, and when a conference has taken place the decision of the Government will be made known.

As to the case of Paul Freeman, the honorable member for the Barrier has no right to expect me to get up without notice and extemporaneously deal with it, and I do not propose to do so.

Mr. CONSIDINE.—I specifically referred to the question of bail.

Mr. WATT.—The honorable member regards this as an important case, chiefly because it has been the subject of agitation in Sydney. I am not at all impressed by the agitation in Sydney.

Mr. CONSIDINE.—It will have to be made stronger.

Mr. WATT.—That would not impress us either. The merits of the case are what concerns the Government, and I do not propose off-hand to pronounce on an issue such as has been raised.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

House adjourned at 4.14 p.m.



# Members of the House of Representatives.

*Speaker*—The Honorable William Elliot Johnson.

*Chairman of Committees*—The Honorable John Moore Chanter.

<sup>10</sup> Abbott, Lieut.-Colonel New England	Johnson, Hon. William Lang (N.S.W.)
Percy Phipps, C.M.G. (N.S.W.)	Elliot
Anstey, Frank .. Bourke (V.)	<sup>6</sup> Jowett, Edmund .. Grampians (V.)
Archibald, Hon. William Hindmarsh (S.A.)	Kelly, Hon. William Henry Wentworth (N.S.W.)
Oliver	Lamond, Hector .. Illawarra (N.S.W.)
<sup>4</sup> Atkinson, Llewelyn .. Wilmot (T.)	Leckie, John William .. Indi (V.)
<sup>4</sup> Bamford, Hon. Frederick Herbert (Q.)	Lister, John Henry .. Corio (V.)
William	Livingston, John .. Barker (S.A.)
Bayley, James Garfield .. Oxley (Q.)	Lynch, John .. Werriwa (N.S.W.)
Best, Hon. Sir Robert Kooyong (V.)	Mackay, George Hugh .. Lilley (Q.)
Wallace, K.C.M.G.	Mahony, William George Dalley (N.S.W.)
Blakeley, Arthur .. Darling (N.S.W.)	Maloney, William .. Melbourne (V.)
<sup>3</sup> Boyd, Hon. James Arthur Henty (V.)	<sup>12</sup> Manifold, Hon. James Corangamite (V.)
Brennan, Frank .. Batman (V.)	Chester
<sup>9</sup> Bruce, Stanley Melbourne Flinders (V.)	Mathews, James .. Melbourne Ports (V.)
Burchell, Reginald John Fremantle (W.A.)	Maxwell, George Arnot .. Fawkner (V.)
Catts, James Howard .. Cook (N.S.W.)	McDonald, Hon. Charles .. Kennedy (Q.)
Chanter, Hon. John Moore Riverina (N.S.W.)	<sup>8</sup> McGrath, David Charles Ballarat (V.)
Chapman, Hon. Austin .. Eden-Monaro	McWilliams, William Franklin (T.)
(N.S.W.)	James
<sup>4</sup> Charlton, Matthew .. Hunter (N.S.W.)	Nicholls, Samuel Robert .. Macquarie (N.S.W.)
Considine, Michael Patrick Barrier (N.S.W.)	Orchard, Hon. Richard Nepean (N.S.W.)
Cook, Right Hon. Sir Parramatta (N.S.W.)	Beaumont
Joseph, P.C., G.C.M.G.	Page, Hon. James .. Maranoa (Q.)
<sup>13</sup> Corbooy, Edwin Wilkie .. Swan (W.A.)	Palmer, Albert Clayton .. Echuca (V.)
<sup>3</sup> Corser, Edward Bernard Wide Bay (Q.)	Pigott, Henry Robert Calare (N.S.W.)
Cresset	Maguire
Falkiner, Franc Breton Hume (N.S.W.)	Poynton, Hon. Alexander Grey (S.A.)
Sadleir	Riley, Edward .. South Sydney
Fenton, James Edward .. Maribyrnong (V.)	(N.S.W.)
Finlayson, William Fyfe .. Brisbane (Q.)	Rodgers, Arthur Stanis- Wannon (V.)
Fleming, William Mont- Robertson (N.S.W.)	laus
<sup>11</sup> Forrest, Right Hon. Lord Swan (W.A.)	Ryrie, General Granville North Sydney
P.C., G.C.M.G.	de Laune, C.B., C.M.G. (N.S.W.)
Foster, Hon. Richard Wakefield (S.A.)	<sup>5</sup> Salmon, Hon. Charles Grampians (V.)
Witty	Carty
Fowler, Hon. James Perth (W.A.)	Sampson, Sydney .. Wimmera (V.)
Mackinnon	Sinclair, Hugh .. Moreton (Q.)
<sup>14</sup> Gibson, William Gerrand Corangamite (V.)	Smith, Hon. Bruce, K.C. Parkes (N.S.W.)
Glynn, Hon. Patrick Angas (S.A.)	Smith, Hon. William Denison (T.)
McMahon, K.C.	Henry Laird
Greene, Hon. Walter Massy Richmond (N.S.W.)	<sup>2</sup> Spence, Hon. William Darwin (T.)
Gregory, Hon. Henry .. Dampier (W.A.)	Guthrie
Groom, Hon. Littleton Darling Downs (Q.)	Story, William Harrison .. Boothby (S.A.)
Ernest	Thomson, John .. Cowper (N.S.W.)
Heitmann, Edward Ernest Kalgoorlie (W.A.)	Tudor, Hon. Frank Yarra (V.)
Higgs, Hon. William Guy Capricornia (Q.)	Gwynne
<sup>1</sup> Howroyd, Charles Richard Darwin (T.)	Wallace, Cornelius .. West Sydney (N.S.W.)
Hughes, Right Hon. Bendigo (V.)	Watkins, Hon. David .. Newcastle (N.S.W.)
William Morris, P.C.	Watt, Hon. William Balaclava (V.)
<sup>7</sup> Irvine, Hon. Sir William Flinders (V.)	Alexander
Hill, K.C.M.G., K.C.	Webster, Hon. William .. Gwydir (N.S.W.)
Jensen, Hon. Jens August Bass (T.)	West, John Edward .. East Sydney (N.S.W.)
	Wise, Hon. George Henry Gippsland (V.)
	Yates, George Edwin .. Adelaide (S.A.)

## HEADS OF DEPARTMENTS.

*Senate*.—C. G. Duffy, C.M.G.

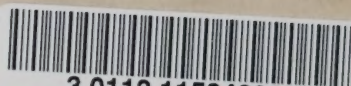
*House of Representatives*.—W. A. Gale.

*Parliamentary Reporting Staff*.—B. H. Friend.

*Library*.—A. Wadsworth.

*Joint House Committee*.—G. H. Monahan.

1. Decease reported 17th June, 1917.—2. Elected 30th June, 1917. Sworn 11th July, 1917.—3. Sworn 11th July, 1917.—4. Appointed Temporary Chairman of Committees, 18th July, 1917.—5. Decease reported 18th September, 1917.—6. Elected 27th October, 1917. Sworn 9th January, 1918.—7. Resignation reported 5th April, 1918.—8. Sworn 19th April, 1918.—9. Elected 11th May, 1918. Sworn 22nd May, 1918.—10. Sworn 7th June, 1918.—11. Decease reported 18th September, 1918.—12. Decease reported 30th October, 1918.—13. Elected 26th October, 1918. Sworn 20th November, 1918.—14. Elected 14th December, 1918. Sworn 25th June, 1919.



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D. F. LUMSDEN,  
Acting Principal Parliamentary Reporter.

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## COMMITTEES.

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### SENATE.

**STANDING ORDERS.**—The President, the Chairman of Committees, Senator Barnes, Senator de Largie, Senator Foll, Senator Guthrie, Senator McDougall, Senator O'Keefe, and Senator Thomas.

**LIBRARY.**—The President, Senator Lt.-Col. Bolton, Senator Gardiner, Senator Keating, Senator Lynch, Senator Maughan, and Senator Pratten.

**HOUSE.**—The President, Senator Bakhap, Senator Buzacott, Senator Lt.-Col. O'Loughlin, Senator Needham, and Senator Col. Rowell.

**PRINTING.**—Senator Barker, Senator Guy, Senator Newland, Senator Plain, Senator Reid, and Senator Senior.

**DISPUTED RETURNS AND QUALIFICATIONS.**—Senator Barnes, Senator Keating, Senator Lynch, Senator Maughan, Senator Pratten, and Senator Senior.

**PUBLIC WORKS.**—Senator Henderson, Senator Needham, and Senator Newland.

**PUBLIC ACCOUNTS.**—Senator Crawford†, Senator Earle, Senator Fairbairn,\* and Senator McDougall.

**INTOXICATING LIQUOR: SELECT COMMITTEE TO INQUIRE INTO EFFECT ON AUSTRALIAN SOLDIERS, &c.**—Senator Thomas, Senator Lieut.-Col. Bolton, Senator Buzacott, Senator Foll, Senator Grant, Senator Guy, and Senator Col. Rowell.

\* Discharged from attendance, 22nd May, 1918.

† Appointed 29th May, 1918.

### HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

**STANDING ORDERS.**—Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister, the Chairman of Committees, Mr. Charlton, Mr. Fowler, Mr. Poynton, and Mr. Tudor.

**LIBRARY.**—Mr. Speaker, Mr. Anstey, Mr. Archibald, Mr. Glynn, Mr. Higgs, Mr. McDonald, Mr. Bruce Smith, and Mr. Wise.

**HOUSE.**—Mr. Speaker, Mr. R. W. Foster, Mr. Livingston, Mr. Mathews, Mr. Page, Mr. Rodgers, Mr. Laird Smith, and Mr. Watkins.

**PRINTING.**—Mr. Bamford, Mr. Fenton, Mr. McWilliams, Mr. Palmer, Mr. Riley, Mr. Sampson, and Mr. West.

**PUBLIC WORKS.**—Mr. Gregory, Mr. Mahony, Mr. Mathews, Mr. Sampson, Mr. Sinclair, and Mr. Laird Smith.

**PUBLIC ACCOUNTS.**—Mr. Atkinson, Mr. J. H. Catts, Mr. Charlton, Mr. Fenton, Mr. Poynton, and Mr. John Thomson.